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Jenny Be Good

Wilbur Finley Fauley

October American

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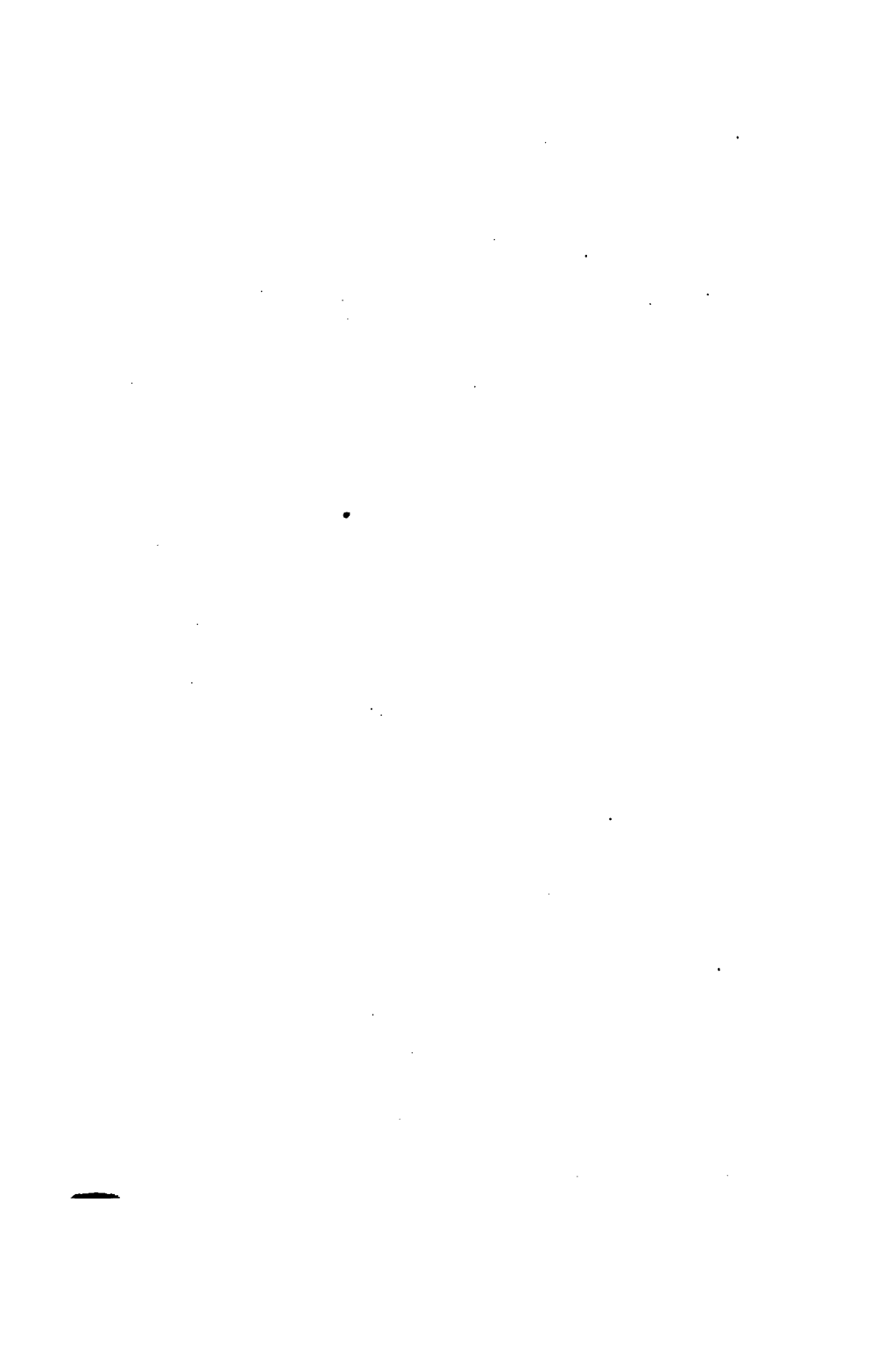
PRESENTED BY

Wilbur Finley Tauley

October 3rd, 1919.

Fauley

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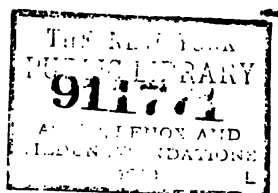


Jenny Be Good

By

WILBUR FINLEY FAULEY

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JUL 10 1919

To the Memory
of My Sister

LILLIE VIOLA

This Volume Is
Affectionately Dedicated.

—W. F. F.

JENNY BE GOOD

CHAPTER I

THE rhythmic clack-clack of the carpet loom sounded through the drowsy old cottage. The operator was a fragile girl of twelve, whose head seemed much too large for her thin body. Her print frock was of the cheapest and scantiest material. Her eyes, of grayish blue, big and wistful; her hair, luxuriant and blue black, like a raven's wing, was combed back straight from the forehead, and braided in pig-tail fashion. Her hands never seemed to tire, although she had been at the loom since sunrise. Driven by fairy fingers, the shuttle flashed between the cross-threads like a dragon-fly darting through the reeds in the marshes.

Presently the hum of the loom ceased. Passing into the kitchen for her evening meal, the girl paused at the window. And this is what she saw through the tracery of bare and stunted orchard trees:

A white shell road, curling over the salt marshes, and melting, to the right, into the purple

indistinctness of Kettle Cliff. To the left, hugging the protected side of the cliff, lay Tumble-down-town, the name given by the natives of Tranquility to the colony of Portuguese fisher-folk, who dwelt in shanties, and were less formal in their habits than the staid inhabitants of the ancient sea-coast village, and certainly, according to the codes and morals of the prim New England folk, much less respectable, and never at any time quite decent.

Jenny never looked across the eery marshes, nor upon the cove, now reflecting the ruddy glare of sunset, and dotted with the dark sails of fishing smacks and trawlers, like the wings of huge sea butterflies, without the vague consciousness of a strange emotion, which warmed her blood. Strictly forbidden by Nancy Beedle, her grandmother, whose roof sheltered her, from mingling with her father's people, the impulse grew upon her to break away from hard work, from her poor, sombre existence, for a life of freedom among her paternal kin, if only to escape the harsh dogmatism and scoldings of her grandmother, of whom she had always been rather frightened. But she suppressed her longing, not that it was less potent than before, but because with advancing years had come the greater power of restraint.

The frugal evening meal passed in silence. Nancy, a dried-up woman of seventy odd, wore a rusty, black silk gown, with false gray ringlets

bobbing under a cap of black lace. The table was spread in the kitchen, for the cottage could only boast of five rooms, which included the one-story extension for the carpet loom and Jenny's attic bedroom.

The parish had no idea of the destitution that reigned at Nancy's table; probably if it had known, the result would have been quite the same. For everybody was tragically poor at Tranquility, and everybody kept up the same sort of shabby show. The polished formalities that Nancy affected, in order to impress upon her grandchild the importance of her own illustrious lineage, as compared to the common paternal stock from which Jenny sprang, were maintained under the most adverse circumstances.

After supper, Jenny sat beside her Granny in the living room, before the big fireplace, piecing carpet rags for the loom, while Nancy wound them into balls. The firelight danced upon the family portraits which hung on the walls, all of them blistered and peeling with age. Jenny knew them by heart. The glum-looking gentleman, with the hook nose, next to the grandfather's clock, was William Cromwell. On the other side of the clock was Jane, his consort. Over the four-poster bed, with its faded chintz draperies—Nancy always slept in the living room, hung Benjamin Beedle, and his wife, Sarah. Between them, a deep frame of walnut, containing a wreath of flowers, fash-

ioned from Nancy's golden tresses, shorn during an attack of fever in early girlhood.

"You should be very proud of your old Granny," said Nancy presently. "There isn't a family in Tranquility that can hold a candle to my ancestors. On the paternal side, I'm a direct descendant of the great Oliver Cromwell. That will account for my courage in the assertion of my convictions, a Cromwellian trait of which I boast."

"I'm very proud of the Beedles," returned Jenny. "Aunt Lucretia said that my great-great-grandfather fought the 'Injuns.' "

"The Beedles were most ordinary stock," said Nancy. "Your grandfather, however, did one clever thing in his life. That was when he married me, a Cromwell."

"Did you love my grandfather?" asked Jenny, as she threaded her needle.

"Silly child! Of course I loved him, or I never would have married him." Nancy could be quite agreeable when she chose.

"Why did you treat my mother so badly?" Jenny put the question rather abruptly.

A moment of silence ensued. Then Nancy spoke. "Your mother married a common fisherman against my wishes. She made her own bed, and she had to lie in it. She brought shame upon the ancient and glorious name of Cromwell. One can't mix wine with ditch-water, you know. And it was a fortunate thing for you that your father

was lost at sea, or he would have claimed you at birth."

"Perhaps my father was a nobleman, in exile." Jenny paused in her stitching, and gazed into the firelight, where she watched a castle, with a moat and drawbridge, rise out of the glowing embers. She went on: "He came from a country where there are princes and princesses. Maybe I'm the daughter of a banished king."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Nancy, her scissors flashing, like her beady eyes, as she cut some rags for the morrow's dyeing.

Jenny said no more. She watched her castle in the fire crumble into ashes.

According to Nancy, Jenny's mother had trampled down the honored traditions of her forbears by marrying a "low-born" foreigner. Such was the old dame's sense of birth and her outraged pride that she had denied her daughter shelter during travail, one dark and stormy Summer's night.

Thus it happened that Jenny was born in a fence corner, where she was found the next morning by Dr. Snubbins, a local physician of good repute, who loved birds more than therapeutics. The doctor's pet name of "Jenny Wren" had clung to the child after her mother's death, a name that bore witness to her birth in the kingdom of the highway, and the noble tradition of bird melodies, wild flowers, and the flute of the wind in the

trees. A few days before her birth, her father, Luis Riano, had been lost at sea.

Thrown upon the mercy of the community, the child had been reared, until she had reached the age of ten, by Miss Lucretia Boggs, the spinster sister of the Reverend Electus Boggs, rector of St. John's-by-the-Sea, who felt a great deal more about babies than she ever said to any one, and the minding of it seemed to fire that which had been lying so long in her bosom, waiting to be fired. From the foster-mother came all the well-bred niceties and the fine distinction of good taste, the subtle manifestation of which came to Jenny later in life.

After Lucretia's departure for the Orient as a missionary, Nancy had assumed guardianship of the orphan, putting her to work at the loom, to help eke out a meagre livelihood by weaving rag rugs and carpets.

Jenny's playmates, at the age of ten, were Zai-dee Zackman, a red-haired girl of fifteen, daughter of Amanda Zackman, her godmother, and Peter Snubbins, the doctor's son, who was six years her senior. But Jenny found herself cut off from her former associations when she came to live with her Granny. Her only consolation, after two years of utter loneliness, was an old fiddle, a parting gift from Lucretia, which she fondled like a doll, and put to bed every night.

Gifted with the rare discernment of her father's people, who see spirits in the solitude of the hills and in the depths of the forest, her new environment had proved to be a veritable breeding-place for the fanciful; her little lonely world, peopled with elves and fairy princes and princesses, and the old house, and everything in it, even the loom itself, a part of the fantastic dreams, clothed in the unrealities of the legendary. As she toiled, she wove dreams into the common fabric.

Thus time went on. It was May. Jenny, now fourteen, was to be confirmed on the morrow. Meantime, she had progressed wonderfully with her violin studies, as the protégée of one Cadwalader Coffin, the organist at St. John's, who fanned the little spark of genius in spite of Nancy's repeated protestations that her grandchild had no more music in her than a gosling.

The day was soft and languorous. Where Jenny stood, on a knoll, overlooking Tumbledown-town, the rich verdancy was broken by the pulsing pink of the dogwood blossoms. Bluebells and buttercups hid in the fence corners, while all about her, the fragrant breath of new-born grasses and leaves, gave a deep, cogent scent, that enveloped her like a perfumed garment of gauze. Far away, the sapphire of the sea melted into the Asia blue of a cloudless sky. Below her, thin, bluish wreathes of wood smoke curled from the stove-

pipe chimneys of the shanties. Rows of red geraniums bloomed on the window-sills.

Preparations were on among the fisher-folk for the celebration of the Eve of St. John. How Jenny longed to be among them, to be one of them. This was the first time that she had ventured so near her paternal kin. Nancy and the neighbors, she knew, would be horrified, and she would be punished, if she were found out.

The ordeal of confirmation she dreaded now more than ever. Why should she be called upon to renounce the things about which she knew so little, the pomps and vanities of a wicked world?

Just then, Sebastian, the shepherd boy, who minded the goats, emerged from behind a clump of willows. She had known Sebastian by sight from childhood. She loved his picturesque garb, his fringed sash, and the lemon yellow handkerchief tied around his neck. And there had been music on his lips, as long back as she could remember. He was whistling now, a gay, rollicking melody.

Darting like a bird into the dense bramble that choked the nearest fence corner, Jenny secreted herself. For the first time in her life, she experienced a certain timidity in meeting a young person of the opposite sex. Through a small opening in the briar, she watched the passing of Sebastian, vaguely conscious of a feeling new and strange. Perhaps Sebastian was a prince in disguise.

The next day, at confirmation, Jenny renounced the Devil and all his works, and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, in a thin, piping voice. Her face was as pale and pensive as that of a wax Madonna when she hurried homeward, in advance of Nancy. The ordeal had frightened her terribly. She quickly changed her snow-white frock for a flower print dress, and pinched her cheeks to make them red. Then she waited her chance to escape somehow from the solemnity of the day, which Nancy made more serious by reading aloud from the psalter after the midday meal.

Finally, the senile lady made preparations for her customary afternoon nap, and sent Jenny off to the attic, with grave exhortation and rather startling innuendos about fire and brimstone.

"Now, Jenny, be good!" Nancy admonished. But Jenny was out of hearing by this time, and a long way from the Sabbath solitude of the attic before the afternoon was half spent.

She was fairly out of breath when she arrived at the shanty abode of her paternal grandfather, Senhor Riano.

The celebration of the rustic festival was at its height, and so much of interest in progress that no one paid the slightest attention to a wisp of a girl, hurrying through the crooked lanes, her hair flying to the four winds, her thin frock whipped by the salt-laden breeze.

Senhor Riano was seated on his front stoop,

rolling and smoking innumerable cigarettes. Several little Rianos were mounting their granddad's shoulders, digging their bare heels into his pot-belly as they scrambled for honors, when Jenny, after some embarrassment, approached him and made herself known.

The old man took her outstretched hand and kissed it reverently. The little Rianos faded from view.

"You maka me so happy!" exclaimed Senhor Riano. "You come so queeck. You maka big surprise." He surveyed her with admiring, paternal eyes. "So, dis is my grandchild." Then he tweaked her ear. "Ah . . . maybe you run away."

"Surely I am old enough to do as I like," said Jenny, as she hugged the old man's knee. "They sha'n't keep me from you any longer. So there!"

"Dame Beedle is vera, vera old," said Senhor Riano, with an apologetic tone. "She is . . . what you say . . . in her dotage."

Jenny laughed outright. "You mean . . . dotty," she chirped. Then she went on: "Granny has forgotten how it feels to be young, and she doesn't care a fig for the things I love . . . the sea, the woods, the winding road, . . . and my fiddle. Some day, I shall play for you. Then you must teach me all the songs that my father loved."

"My son!" Senhor Riano crossed himself. "Peace be to his soul."

"You adorable old gentleman," cried Jenny. "I'm going to love you, oh, so much!"

She emphasized her remark with an impulsive kiss upon her grandsire's cheek.

They were fast friends now. In happy sequence, the afternoon was passing all too quickly for prodigal Jenny.

Then who should chance by but Sebastian, the shepherd boy, in holiday attire. He wore a green velvet coat and brown corduroy breeches, and carried a guitar. Jenny, who was sucking an orange amid the family group, grew bold, and beckoned to the youth, who came gladly, and sat on the steps at her feet. And again the vague, indefinable something thrilled her as she looked down upon this story-book youth engagingly. At her request, Sebastian strummed the guitar. Presently, his voice rose in a pleasant cantiga.

There was a lilt to the melody; it was such a tantalizing air that Jenny rose to her feet and pranced down the steps, while the little Rianos clapped their hands in glee. She felt joyous and free, and whirled and kicked up her heels. Sebastian's eyes never left Jenny, and his heaving, curling eyelashes rose and fell like curtains, showing and hiding the strange something which the dancing girl had kindled and set aflame in his heart. And Jenny, as she danced, realized for the first time that she possessed some wonderful power of attraction for the male, as subtle as the

perfume of the flowers, and she experienced an impulse to test the efficacy of this surprising power.

In her hand she held a red tulip. Approaching Sebastian quickly, she thrust the tulip under his nose, then turned and ran. Glancing back, she saw the youth in pursuit. She ran here and there, darting between the sunflowers and leaping over the flower beds. Before she knew it, he had caught her, and he held her tight in his strong arms while he tore the tulip from her grasp fiercely, but so gently that not a petal was harmed. Then he released her, and Jenny sat down on the steps again, panting for breath.

When the shepherd boy departed, he wore the spoils of the chase, the red tulip, stuck jauntily over his ear. And Jenny wondered at the magic of this vague something within her that had lured the boy to the chase. Or was it the red tulip?

Then Senhor Riano told the story of his boyhood in Portugal, in which there was no mention of princes or princesses, much to Jenny's disappointment. She thrilled at his description of the great storms that would sweep across the Serra la Estrella, although she was grieved to know that her grandfather had been only a shepherd, subsisting mainly on fruits and large flat cheeses. His voice was deep and broken when he sang:

*“Eu direi que em peito amante
Inda amore excede o mar:*

*Pois que o mar tem a vazante,
E amore tem só preamar."*

The bell on the little shanty chapel, where a visiting priest held mass on alternate Sundays, was ringing for vespers, when Jenny hurried homeward. The trawlers were creeping to port, like tired ghosts. Fortunately, there was no sign of her Granny when she tiptoed up to the attic. When she came downstairs, in a fresh frock, Nancy was just coming out of her nap. And what was Jenny thinking about as she brewed the tea and sliced the bread for supper?

She knew now that she was pretty, that there were boys more attractive than Peter; that everything she liked most was to be had at a cost, and if she did not scheme and fight against people and circumstances, she would be crushed to earth.

CHAPTER II

It was Aaron Shuttles, traction and realty magnate, who put Tranquility on the map as a fashionable summer resort. In less than no time, it seemed,—three years, as a matter of fact, this modern Midas transformed Kettle Cliff into a spot of beauty, as in an extravaganza of fairyland; but Aaron was spectacular or nothing at all.

The gables and chimneys of a huge rambling Elizabethan hostelry rose above the verdure of the cliff; Tranquility Towers, if you please. And more wonderful than this, an electric railway established a connection with the outside world, running from Londonville, on the main steam trunk line between New York and Boston.

Four times a day an electric train rolled into the terminal at Tranquility, from which stepped, first, dusky porters, then fashionably gowned women and daintily frocked children; pretty girls, wearing the last word in coats and frocks; young men, with golf bags, tennis racquets, and other frivolous luggage; old men, well groomed;

French maids and nurse girls, English governesses, Japanese valets, footmen, chauffeurs, with many monogrammed bags and hat boxes. And there were private motors and char-a-bancs, with chauffeurs and footmen in livery, to convey the guests from the station to Tranquility Towers.

The changes which set in at the hamlet were quite as marvelous in their way as the transformation of Kettle Cliff. Smart little modiste and millinery shops began to spring up, mushroomlike, and Paris and New York were prominently displayed in gilt letters on the plate-glass windows. Some of the shops even displayed crests; one of them in particular advertised the fact that its London branch was patronized by Queen Mary. There were palmists, masseurs, and manicures; also a boot shop, and a chemist, where rare perfumes and invisible face powder and rouge could be had. All camp followers in the train of dollars and fashion.


Smart equipages, plum-colored limousines and crested victorias, rumbled through the main street of the village, which everybody thought so restful and quaint. Telephones jingled; telegraph instruments clicked messages to all parts of the globe, and a wireless station flashed dots and dashes from the pinnacle of the cliff, to sea-going vessels. Daily life at Tranquility was reflected in the metropolitan press, and the society weeklies were filled with gushing paragraphs about the

fads and fancies of the guests at The Towers. Renowned artists painted wonderful pictures of the Portuguese colony.

The old-time institutions took on a semblance of new life to meet the growing demands. Where could the guests at The Towers attend church but at St. John's-by-the-Sea? When they were taken ill, who was better prepared to dose them with pills and potions than Dr. Snubbins? Amanda Zackman opened her cottage for city lodgers. Zaidee spent most of her time now on her mother's front porch, where she entertained the male lodgers, with a display of expensive hosiery.

As the flood tide will sometimes leave a small island of sand untouched, just so did the new order of things seem to sweep over the community, leaving the cottage under the hill high and dry. Owing to Nancy's antipathy to the new and modern, she kept the front shutters closed, and allowed the garden to run rank with weeds. The noise of the motor cars wore her nerves to a frazzle, and the smell of the gasoline made her deathly sick, so she declared. She had aged greatly in three years.

Jenny's day at the loom was from sun to sun, but she worked with some incentive now, for Nancy was allowing her so much a yard; not very much, but sufficient to keep alive the hope that she might some day be enabled to pay for her musical education. She toiled for her fiddle as a factory woman toils for her child. Already she



had eight dollars hidden in the toe of an old stocking; and the season was just beginning, with a steadily increasing demand for rag rugs and carpets.

All this meant seclusion for Jenny. Not that she might have found the new order of things at all interesting, for the realization that there were so many people in the world who had everything, while she had nothing, caused her pain. She kept her thoughts and ambitions to herself, being somehow endowed with the secretiveness of the wren, whose name she bore. Although cloistered, she was thankful for her acreage of dreams, untouched and unsullied as yet by the things of the world. The wooded hill, just back of the cottage, was her refuge from toil when the summer came. She called it Heavenly Hill, for no other reason save that it felt so heavenly to be alone there, when the daily grind was done.


Sometimes, at twilight, she would take the fiddle, and call forth with her bow, all the strange and beautiful sounds of the forest. She kept so much to herself, in fact, that the neighbors began to speak of her as queer, "almost as queer as old Nancy Beedle."

Peter called on Jenny regularly every Sunday evening, often escorting her home from evensong. He had proposed marriage to her at least a dozen times, but Jenny had laughed at him, and called him a silly boy. Peter was a very nice and sedate

young man, with his big, black-rimmed spectacles, which gave him the air of seriousness and solemnity, quite in keeping with his future calling as a minister of the gospel. He was in charge of the newsstand at the hotel, and was planning to enter preparatory school in the Autumn.

Jenny looked very sweet in a simple white frock as she sat beside Peter in the char-a-banc, one evening, on their way to the hotel from the station. This was Jenny's first visit to Tranquility Towers; incidentally, she was to meet Professor Gene Jiggs, the leader of the orchestra, with whom Peter had struck up quite a friendship. The flush of her cheeks, due to the excitement of the occasion, was delicately fused under her dark, velvety skin, and her eyes flashed like whitish sapphires, in which the blue and the gray are so exquisitely blended. Peter compared her long, slender neck to that of a swan, but Peter must be excused for his exaggerated comparisons.

What Jenny saw at the hotel she could only liken to the pictures in the magazines, with which Peter kept her generously supplied. She sat down on a basket chair on the deserted piazza while Peter disappeared into the hotel, and watched the guests pass through the great oak hall into the dining room. She was stunned at the realization that so much that was wonderful and beautiful could spring up, like a magic growth of a night, as in Grimm's Fairy Tales.



Then her mind dwelt upon her own insignificance, her poverty, the wretched clothes she possessed. She grew ashamed of her hands, stained with the dyes from the carpet rags, and calloused from the eternal grind at the loom.

Glancing up, she saw Peter approaching, accompanied by a funny-looking little man, with a face like a rabbit's. Her introduction to Professor Jiggs might have proved embarrassing if she had not looked into two merry, twinkling eyes, and before she could think of aught to say, the Professor had pinched her cheek and squeezed her hand.

"So you are the wonderful Professor Jiggs," Jenny managed to say finally. Her slender girlishness was illumined by the light from within.

"I am not wonderful, my child," returned Gene; "I am simply myself." Looking up at Peter, who stood a head taller, he went on: "Peter is such a nice quaint boy. Some day he's going to tell us all how to get to Heaven."

Naturally, Peter smiled foolishly, and then grew more red when Jenny remarked that he could play the cornet beautifully. Gene then concluded: "I hear also that a certain little girl plays the fiddle like an angel."

It was Jenny's turn now to grow crimson. But she liked the Professor. He must be sixty, or thereabouts. And what a cute little goatee he had.

Peter excused himself and went back into the hotel, while Gene sat on a chair alongside of Jenny. They talked a lot about the fiddle. "The fiddle is human," declared Gene. "and fits into our moods. Do you not find it so?"

"It is my best friend, my child . . . my everything," said Jenny.

"Exactly," asserted Gene; "for this frail little body has a soul. It speaks with a voice of tenderness, of passion, of woe. It is a body fashioned from wood, in which still lingers the silent mystery of the forest, the silvery purl of mountain brooks, the song of the wild bird. And the hairs of the bow are from the tails of white horses. Is it any wonder that we who play may ride on white horses above the sordid earth, to the realms of ecstasy?"

This was a bit beyond Jenny, so she remained silent, but nevertheless awed. In fancy, she was riding the white steed across the darkling blue of the sky, just as folks used to say Nancy rode her broom.

"Next to my fiddle, I love my pipe," Gene continued, settling back in the wicker chair, with a long-stemmed pipe in his mouth. "When I am happy, I smoke." He took a long draw. "And when I am unhappy, I also smoke."

Jenny hoped to herself that the pleasant Professor would never find cause to be unhappy. How

kind he was to her. Before he sat down, he had inquired if she was in a draught; and before lighting his pipe, he had asked if she objected to tobacco. Nobody had ever been quite so attentive to her.

"Oh, but I'm just a beginner," said Jenny, after a pause. "You see, I'm not like other girls. I've never had a chance."

"Yet you have something many girls would be proud to possess." Gene, as he spoke, leaned forward in his chair. "I recognized it the moment I looked into your eyes. You are little, my friend, but you have a big soul. And it is soul that makes music, a divine spark that gold cannot buy." He took a couple of puffs on his pipe. "Some day you shall meet my Clementina," he went on. "She's my wife. There's an old-world proverb: 'One God, one wife, and many friends.' That is me. Clementina is a Zeeland woman, very plump and very rosy. She was born in the village of De Zoom, and her father kept a cheese farm. We've been married thirty years. Our hearts were broken when Mimi died. She was our little daughter, and if she had lived, she would have been just like you. Poor little Mimi!" His voice trembled. He cleared his throat. "And so your name is Jenny. Jenny what?"

Then Jenny told him how she came about her nickname, and all about her birth and daily toil at the loom. "I don't know just exactly what I

am," she faltered. "When Granny is cross, she calls me a sardine, because my father was a Portuguese fisherman."

"Now, I like you better than ever!" exclaimed Gene. "The secret is out. In your veins runs the blood of the New England pioneers, mingled with the beauty and sentiment of an ancient race. My dear child, you should be proud of such a heritage. You have energy, poetry, imagination, passion, flowing through your little body; and to think you didn't know it. Take my advice, and lavish the treasure of your temperament upon your fiddle. Then you will become great . . . magnificent." He took her hand and patted it. "You must play for me. I shall be your master. If Granny objects, we'll lock her up in a dark closet."

Later Jenny heard the Professor play, first, a *fantasie caprice*, sparkling with a display in *staccato*, and then a *concerto*, which rose transcendently beautiful above the onslaught of the orchestra. And the little girl's heart was stirred; she was all aglow, riding on a white steed, in a pageant of summer clouds.

Gene called at the cottage the very next day, and was received in state by Nancy. He smacked his lips over her sherry, but nursed a fear that the old woman, like a witch, was watching her chance to push him headlong into the fireplace, where he would be changed, perhaps, into an old ginger-

bread man, quite well done and browned to a nicety.

Nancy, however, did nothing of the sort. She was agreeably impressed with the Professor, and chattered away, with piquant remarks about the fashionable folk at The Towers, who made life miserable for her, she said, with their tooting automobile horns, and smell, and dust, and what not. Then she tried to impress him with the dignity of her house and the glory of her ancestors, which made Gene exceedingly small; and if Jenny had not put in her appearance about this time, the poor Professor would have had little pride remaining in him.


There stole into the darkened room—for Nancy still kept the shutters closed, the soft strains of the violin. It seems Jenny had caught sight of Gene as he entered the house, and she had taken advantage of the interim to change her frock. So, rather than undergo the ordeal of standing up formally before the Professor, she had seized upon the idea, and it was a bit theatrical, although the thought came natural enough, of making her entrance while playing. The selection she played was quite simple in theme. Gene was delighted with the effect rather more than with Jenny's playing. Undoubtedly she had talent, he said, but she also had a great deal to learn and unlearn. For one thing, she must give up the showy, sugary selections, and devote all her time to exercises.

Jenny felt terribly downhearted at this, but she rallied when she heard the Professor gain Nancy's consent for two lessons a week, when she expressed the desire to hug him good and hard, at which Nancy exclaimed: "Tut, tut, my child!"

After the day and the hour for the lessons had been agreed upon, Jenny insisted upon showing Gene through the house, and just to exhibit her versatility, she worked the loom for him. Then she led him down to the pond, and asked him to select a nice fat goose. What else had she to offer him in the great gratitude of her heart? But Gene could hardly be expected to lug a live goose under his arm to the hotel, so, as a gentle compromise, he accepted an invitation for dinner, at some future day, when Jenny assured him, she would serve this selfsame goose, roasted to a juicy brown.

Just before Gene departed, he took occasion to remark to Nancy: "The girl is beautiful, talented, a real princess in disguise." Nancy, remembering what Jenny had said about her being the daughter of a king, wondered at the strange course of events.

It was at the Zackman's that Jenny first encountered Anne Silverman. Anne was among the week-end guests from New York, and, apparently, on bad terms with Zaidee, who took the first opportunity, when Anne's back was turned, to stick her tongue out at the visitor.



Evidently Anne had eyes in the back of her head, for no sooner had Zaidee left them than she said to Jenny: "Miss Zackman apparently has no regard for me since I told her she was silly to believe all that the young men lodgers told her was true. She's a regular little flirt."

Jenny flamed up instantly in behalf of Zaidee. "Oh, but you are mistaken, Miss Silverman," she said. "Zaidee and I have grown up together, and I ought to know. She may be vain and like the boys. Surely there is no harm in that."

"No harm, of course," responded Anne, "but a waste of time. With me there are so many other things in life, real serious things, to occupy my attention. If you had spent your life as I have, among the beehives of New York, the great East Side, where it is all grind and crush, you would not censure me. But what could you, or anyone else hereabouts, in this paradise of quietude, know of such misery? You are only a child, but you are capable of feeling, of right thinking. I recognized your capabilities the moment I met you. You are nothing like this Zackman girl . . . you have a soul."

Jenny smiled. Twice now had she been told by utter strangers that she possessed a soul. Strange that Nancy, or even Lucretia, had not mentioned the fact; it must be a fact. At any rate, Anne interested her keenly. She could not be much over twenty, and yet she seemed to

be carrying the world on her shoulders. So with a speculative dancing of her eyes, hungry for new perceptions and ideas, she pressed Anne to tell more about herself.

Said Anne: "My child, I'm just a mite among the millions, but I'm fighting against conditions which give one law for the rich and another for the poor. I'm a seamstress by trade." Then she went on to tell how she and her kind were bent upon assailing the present system of society, which allowed the centralization of wealth, the prevalence of slums and sweat shops, child and woman labor, and offered no equality of opportunity to the individual. "As the rich bourgeois class grow richer," Anne went on, "the proletariat, the workers, sink deeper into misery and degradation. You are a worker yourself. I can tell by your hands."

Jenny owned up to a life of toil, and she showed the stains and hard spots on her hands to prove it. She also told of her fiddle, of her ambitions to become a great musician; and before she knew it, she was knee-deep in a subject which Anne seemed to dismiss as frivolous—love.

"Of course you believe in love," she pattered on. "Paul and Virginia are my favorite lovers. I suppose I shall fall in love some day. Wouldn't it be glorious to fall in love with a prince with golden boots, and to wander with him in the fragrant forest? And when it would storm, it al-

ways storms in story books, we could hide in a cave, and . . .”

“It must be very nice to look out of your window upon life,” interpolated Anne. “Still, romance is only a development of modern times. The ancients knew nothing about it, the Old Testament will prove that; and as for wooing, as we know it, this did not really begin until the age of chivalry, ten centuries ago. It is still in a crude stage. Perhaps the true development will come when class animosity will have been vanquished, the true comradeship between men and women.”

Jenny gasped. There was a mixture of seriousness and comicality in her eyes.

Anne continued: “Always remember this, my child, that whatever qualities you may develop in time, the rich will seize upon it, and crush it out of you. And I say this to you, that you have as much right to enjoy the beautiful things of life as they have. Your rights and interests, even if you are only a young girl, are the divine rights and interests of the individual.”

“And so endeth the second lesson,” drawled Jenny, with a sanctimonious air. Then she took Anne by both hands, and in a girlish, ingratiating manner, hoped Anne would not feel offended at her lack of seriousness. She even invited Anne to call upon her before she returned to New York. It was quite natural then on Anne’s part to return

the compliment, so she said: "When you come to New York, be sure and look me up." She took from her leather purse a neatly printed card and gave it to Jenny.

The idea of looking Anne up in New York overcame Jenny's poise for the moment. New York must be a terribly big place. In fancy, she compared it to Little Dorrit's London, with dark and narrow streets, lamps glimmering in the fog, great stone bridges, and crowds of hurrying people. It came over her forcibly then that if she did really possess wings, why not try them? What strangers took for her soul were only her wings. If not, then what was it that could waft her, in a wink of the eye, into the broad highway of blue, where clouds were castles, or carry her far afield, where the jewels glistened in the cowslip's ear?

Jenny really owned a nest in the trees, on the summit of Heavenly Hill, cleverly concealed among the leafage as though built by feathered architects. The afternoon following her talk with Anne, she sought her sylvan retreat. In years gone by the spot had been the site of a sugar camp, and the nest was what remained of a tiny wooden house, constructed between two maple trees, about fifteen feet from the ground, evidently intended for a guard-house, when the sap was running from the trees. The house had a door and a little window, and was accessible from below by a crude

ladder, nailed to one of the trees. The roof leaked in places, and after a storm the floor would be littered with twigs and leaves.

Jenny had made it very cosy with various appointments, including a rug of green colored rags, in the making of which she had woven dreams as the birds weave the joy of living into the soft linings of their nests. There was a couch, made of fresh pine branches, a backless chair, and a broken mirror. Here she would play the fiddle and talk to the birds. Sometimes, when lying motionless on her pine couch, the birds would peep in clownish fashion at her through the chinks in the wall, or hop on the window-sill, lured there by bread crumbs. One scarlet-throated warbler had grown quite audacious, and would perch himself on the window ledge, eyeing his pretty self in the looking-glass.

Before very long, Jenny came to know their likes and dislikes, their follies, and their little love secrets. The wood wrens grew quite friendly. Mr. Wood Wren would curtsy to Jenny with his tiny brown head, and entertain her with his incessant "whiddy-you," and "thri-ou-thri-ou." Mrs. Wood Wren did all the work when it came to nest building, and the little chap seemed to delight in applauding his mate's industry and skill, cheering her with his constant presence, and making pretty speeches. Then there came a day when Mr. Wood Wren burst forth exultantly; and

Jenny, leaning far out of the window, glimpsed an egg in their nest.

. . . For half an hour she sawed away laboriously at her exercises, thinking betimes of the Professor's pleasant call, and the strange teachings of Miss Silverman.

All at once, her bird neighbors set up chirrup of alarm, with much scolding on the part of Mrs. Wood Wren. If Jenny had been a fledgling, she might have realized that danger was near. But it was not until she heard the snap of a dead twig below her nest that she stopped playing. For a moment her heart beat furiously. Never before had her domain in the forest been invaded; never had she experienced the slightest cause for alarm. She listened intently. Five minutes passed. Not a sound.

The incident, however, unnerved her, so she set about to prepare for instant flight. She would leave her fiddle behind, and return for it later in the afternoon. She peered cautiously from the window, and felt greatly relieved when she saw no one about, although the heavy foliage partly hid the ground from view. A woodpecker, hammering away at a neighboring tree, gave her courage. So through the door she fled, down the ladder, with the agility of a chipmunk.

And there *he* stood. The Prince of her dreams!

By strategy, Royal Renshaw had fooled even the woodpecker, although he had not guessed at

the gender of the occupant of the little hut amid the trees. It might have been Peter Pan for all he knew.

As he faced the bewitching little creature, all the latent imagery of his heart suddenly glowed, like tinder under the spark of the flint. He waited for Jenny to break the silence, but he waited in vain, for time and femininity wait on no man. Like a flash, Jenny turned and ran through the tall timber, as adroitly as a bird darts through the dense foliage, as lightly as the south wind hurries through the trees.

By the time Royal reached the edge of the woods, Jenny was encircling the duck pond, frightening the geese in their pen in her mad flight, so that they flapped their great white wings. The noise of the geese brought Nancy to the kitchen door, and she waved her staff in Royal's direction; at least it seemed so to him, although Nancy was only endeavoring to silence the birds. A quick, frightened glance backward, and Jenny disappeared into the cottage.

And from that moment, the quaint old place under the hill became to Royal an abiding place of dreams, while his thoughts were sweetly distracted betwixt love and mystery.

CHAPTER III

THAT evening, Peter escorted Jenny to the hotel, to see the charity tableaux. Nancy raised no objection, except to caution her grandchild against the vanities of the world, with the usual reminder: "Now, Jenny, be good!"

Peter saw Jenny to a seat in a small balcony at the rear of the ballroom. The only other occupant was an electrician, already busy with the calcium lights. Peter was to drop in for her at ten o'clock.

Heavy damask curtains partly screened the balcony, so that Jenny could observe all that was going on without being in evidence. Glancing at the programme, she saw that the proceeds of the entertainment were to be devoted to the poor and sick of the parish. The name of Reverend Boggs was prominently displayed, but not quite so prominent, she noticed, as that of Mrs. Aaron Shuttles, who was chairman of the committee of arrangements. There were to be three groups of tableaux; the first, "The Goose Girl at the Well." Peeping

from behind the curtain she glimpsed below a garden of femininity, from which rose a rich perfume, a mist of Bergamot; where jewels gleamed fitfully like glow worms.

The lights were dimmed. The strange-looking apparatus near her began to emit a hissing sound, then a long shaft of light, disclosing, in a huge gilt frame on the stage, an old peasant woman and a prince.

There *he* stood again.

The strange young man she had met at the foot of the ladder, on Heavenly Hill, and a real prince now, clad in purple, with golden boots, and, wonders to behold! the boots had red tassels on their tops. Jenny's cheeks glowed, and her heart beat with tremendous thumps. The curtains fell, the ballroom rang with applause.

Hastily scanning the programme, Jenny found what she was looking for: "The Young Prince . . . Royal Renshaw." So Royal was his name. That meant kingly. Just then some one hurried up the steps to the balcony, and addressed the electrician. Jenny sat in a darkened corner, and by pulling the damask curtain a little to one side, she shut herself off entirely from view.

"I say, Mister Calcium Man," spoke a boyish voice, "that light was rotten. You didn't half cover the picture. Where's your green gelatine? We must have a green light for all the forest scenes."

Jenny heard the electrician mumble something, and then stumble down the steps, evidently to go in search of the green gelatine. Quite by accident she dropped her programme, and in leaning over to pick it up, somehow her hold on the curtain relaxed.

Royal, standing at the head of the stairs, stared in dumb bewilderment at the familiar face and figure suddenly revealed to him, while Jenny sat and stared at Royal like a poor dumb creature at bay.

"Good evening." Royal broke the tensivity of the situation. "Don't you remember me?" (Could Jenny ever forget?) Royal went on: "I'm afraid I was very rude this afternoon. Please accept my apologies."

"I was frightened . . . so I ran home," ventured Jenny, blushing furiously.

"I'm awfully glad you're here," said Royal, after a glorious pause. "I was beginning to think I might never see you again, although I meant to manage it somehow or other."

"Oh, but we've never been introduced to each other," Jenny stammered, fumbling nervously with her programme.

"That would spoil everything," Royal declared. "I hate formalities. I'm formal because I have to be, but it is not required of people who live, as you do, in the trees. Peter Pan wasn't the least bit formal."

"My name is Jenny Riano, and I live with my Granny, Nancy Beedle, in the little house you saw under the hill." Jenny felt it her duty to at least establish her claim to respectability. She had never heard of Peter Pan; for all she knew, he might be a most improper person. She continued: "This is my second visit to the hotel. I came tonight with my friend, Peter Stubbins, who keeps the newsstand, and he's going to see me safely home. And . . . oh, yes, this programme was given me by my friend, Professor Jiggs, who is to be my music master."

"Why, I know Professor Jiggs, and Peter, too," said Royal. "They're both good friends of mine."

Another glorious pause ensued, during which time Royal's eyes never left the slender figure behind the damask curtains, while Jenny pretended to be keenly interested in her programme, not daring to raise her eyes.

A woman's voice, rather harsh and grating, broke in upon their silent understanding. "Royal! Are you there?"

Royal showed himself at the top of the stairs. "I'm here, Mother," he replied. "The electrician will be back at any moment now. We simply can't go on until we have the proper lights. Oh, but I must stay until everything's all right. What's that?"

"Mrs. Van Mater and Jolanda have arrived."

The voice was pitched low, but loud enough for Jenny to hear. "They came over from Newport on the last train. Jolanda is a wonder dream. Do hurry—do!"

"That was my mother speaking," explained Royal as he joined Jenny in the dark corner, where she seemed to glow like violet rays. "I'm her son by a former marriage. My stepfather is Aaron Shuttles. I dare say you've heard of him."

Jenny gave a little gasp. The establishment of Royal's relationship broke down the cobweb bridge of dreams she had been building as they talked. She had always associated Aaron Shuttles, the man who had transformed Tranquility overnight, in her mind, with King Solomon; she didn't know why, except that King Solomon did so many wonderful things and was so terribly rich. The bridge having collapsed, nothing remained but the wreckage, and the chasm that ever divides the poor from the rich.

For a few moments she had exulted in the thought that the golden threads of the spindle had drawn this fascinating prince to her side, as it did to the poor girl in the fairy tale. Resplendent in his royal array, he was everything that a prince should be and more. She was sure he was a head taller than she, and wonderfully made, with hair that was almost flaxen, and eyes as blue as the sea. All the princes she had ever read about had flaxen hair and blue eyes. His shoulders seemed

massive. She had noticed his hands, too; how big and strong they were. His voice was modulated and pleasant, not at all like his mother's.

What a strange name—Jolanda! The thought of her, whoever she was, swept down the chasm like an icy breath. Said Jenny: "Hadn't you better go now?"

Royal leaned over Jenny, a little nearer than before. "Promise me you won't run away," he exacted in a soft, appealing voice, for it was plain to them both that the assembly was growing impatient. "I'll return after the next tableau. You will wait for me."

"Oh, but you mustn't come back," said Jenny in a serious voice. "You must stay in your world, and I'll stay in mine. We've nothing in common. Why, I'm the poorest girl in Tranquility. Please, don't come back . . . not to-night."

"Then . . . to-morrow?"

"Oh . . . to-morrow!" Jenny hadn't thought of the morrow.

"To-morrow afternoon, say at four o'clock . . . in the forest, where we first met."

Jenny gave in then, but in her own way. "Well, then, to-morrow. Come and find me."

"I might search for you all the afternoon," said Royal. "I'm not very well acquainted hereabouts; besides, it would be wasting so much time."

That was true. Jenny had not thought of it quite in that light. She wrinkled her brow, then

said quickly: "I shall take with me a bag of crushed corn, the kind I feed to the geese, and I will strew the corn in my path, like the wood-cutter did in the fairy story." Her eyes danced in the mischief of the enterprise.

"Splendid," declared Royal. "But be sure and start at the edge of the woods where you crept through the fence, beside the big birch tree."

Jenny said she would. She was wondering if the field sparrows or the blackbirds would pick up the corn, so that her prince could find no trace of her. She would make sure that they didn't, even if she had to retrace her footsteps, to shoo them away.

The electrician was coming up the stairs. Jenny's heart stopped beating. Warm lips had never touched her hand before. It was the silent homage of a prince to the poorest and yet the richest girl in all the kingdoms of the world that night.

Royal met the electrician at the head of the stairs. "You've been gone a deucedly long time," he asserted in a gruff voice.

One golden strand remained out of Jenny's wrecked bridge of gossamer texture, and she clung to it tenaciously as she sat enthralled, bewildered, until it came time for Peter to escort her home. She was strangely silent during the remainder of the evening, although she managed to give Peter a gladsome good night. He left her in a rather

puzzled state of mind. In truth, poor Peter was sadly perplexed.

Going to bed was not a social rite at Nancy's. Jenny jumped into her nightgown as quick as a wink almost, and was just in the act of extinguishing the candle, when there came a loud knocking at the kitchen door. Hurrying downstairs, she admitted her godmother, Amanda Zackman, who sank down on the nearest chair, weeping and wringing her hands.

Zaidee, it seems, had run off with one of her mother's city lodgers—a circus man. Jenny remembered the man, also that Zaidee had favored him specially because he manicured his nails, and smelled so nice.

The news stunned Jenny, for events, strange and overpowering in their newness, were beginning to measure the bigness of her soul.

CHAPTER IV

SOPHIA SHUTTLES emerged from the combined ministrations of her manicurist and hair dresser at ten o'clock. Noting the hour, she aroused herself to the pleasant fact that she had half an hour in which to loll about her sumptuous suite, at Tranquility Towers, in something loose, which happened to be, this quiet Sabbath morning, a turquoise satin robe de chambre, richly embellished with gold embroideries and white storks.

Sophia was short and fat, and her vulgarities at times oozed out like unctious butter from the chinks of an old wooden churn. It had been a matter of recent remark, however, that she was showing an improvement in her manners and methods, and well she might, for this pushing, persevering person was on her way from the upper West Side to Fifth Avenue, a social road dotted with pitfalls, as everybody knows. The summer at the hotel was in reality a period of preparedness. Already the public was being beguiled by spicy paragraphs in the society weeklies

concerning her plans and movements. At this very moment, Sophia's eyes had settled upon a particularly pleasing notice in the current number of "Chatter"; and she read with unfeigned delight the following:

"The fashionable guests at Tranquility Towers have been commenting on Mrs. Aaron Shuttles' improved figure. She has lost many pounds, and looks almost slender as she drives her electric runabout to the village."

Sophia was so pleased with the paragraph that she summoned Wilkins, her secretary and publicity agent, from the adjoining room, to voice her gratitude and pleasure.

"Yes, milady," said Wilkins, a woman of advanced middle age, who carried herself with a certain stateliness, and viewed life with a frigid reserve.

"Just a moment, please." Sophia spoke now in a tone of impatience.

"I hope the typewriter did not annoy you, milady," Wilkins put in. "I was getting out some notices for the morning papers about your guests, Mrs. Van Mater and her daughter, Jolanda."

"Nothing annoys me so much as these impersonal paragraphs," snapped Sophia. "This is a vicious dab at me—me who ain't——" She stopped short as Wilkins raised her eyebrows

(whenever Sophia slipped up on her grammar, Wilkins was to elevate her eyebrows).

It appears that Sophia had chanced upon another paragraph in "Chatter", not quite so pleasing. She read it aloud: How Mrs. Van Mater was to furnish an opening wedge for a certain wealthy person from the West Side, to pry her way into society, a person of low social stock and vulgarly rich, so rich, indeed, that her kitchen sink was said to be encrusted with jewels.

"How could you write such a hateful piece as that?" cried Sophia. "Low social stock! Oh, it's awful, simply awful."

"As you know, milady," responded Wilkins, "we are on the eve of a social campaign. I admit the paragraph in question is a despicable one, but you must have publicity now even if we have to stoop to the slinging of mud. If society will not sling mud at you, then you must sling it at yourself. Pleasant paragraphs now and then in the press about yourself amount to very little. But just imagine the effect of this scurrilous notice on Mrs. Van Mater's fashionable connections at Newport, especially when they read in to-morrow's papers that she and her daughter are your week-end guests at The Towers."

Sophia admitted finally that it was a diplomatic stroke on the part of her secretary, and she was quite content to let her social destiny rest in the hands of such an enterprising and resourceful

agent. She liked Wilkins because she never talked about herself. Her only fear was that her secretary would in time become so Americanized—she was formerly in the service of Lady Bathurst in London—as to drop the high-sounding appellation of “milady.” This aristocratic designation was like an intoxicant to her plebeian soul; she glowed under it.

Sophia Cruikshank’s rise in the world had been rather spectacular. As a dressmaker in Scranton, Pennsylvania, she made annual pilgrimages to New York in quest of the latest word from the Paris modistes for her patrons, making a specialty of “stylish stouts”—thus the lure of the metropolis grew upon her, and after her mother’s demise, she shook the dust of Scranton from her sandals and moved to the big town, accompanied by her sister, Carrie. Here Sophia soon became head saleswoman in a smart modiste shop. Then she married Percival Renshaw, a demonstrator of physical culture in the department stores, a black sheep of an old Virginia family.

Their only child was named after one of his father’s antecedents, who lived in the days of King William. Royal was ten years of age when his father was killed in a street railway accident, and it was through Sophia’s suit for damages that she first met Aaron Shuttles, a widower, without issue. Aaron was lonesome; he wanted a son. Above all he wanted to save his traction company

from damages, so he married Sophia. Naturally, Sister Carrie passed under their protection.

A new house in Fifth Avenue was now nearing completion. Once impregnable in her castle, Sophia dreamed of glorious social conquests. And the dream was taking on reality, for Aaron and his spouse stood shoulder to shoulder in every matter that affected the financial and social status of the house of Shuttles, even if love had become a stranger on their doormat. They were preparing to use the battering ram if necessary.

Just now everything seemed to hinge on Royal, who was nearing his twenty-first birthday, and destined soon to enter upon the big business of life. Royal was highly popular with the younger set, a good talker, and a passionate dancer. For the last year or so he had lived at the Midtown Club, a most exclusive organization.

Nature often works contradictions. Royal had inherited the pure strain of his paternal forefathers, who were gentlemen to the manner born of old Virginia. His legacy of good taste and gentle manners had seemingly skipped a generation. He never had anything in common with his father, and not one trait was alloyed with the ordinary maternal stock.

At the present time, Aaron and Sophia were banking on his marrying Jolanda, and they were laying plans to bring it about. So far Royal had been rather disappointing to his ambitious kin,

who were using him as a sort of cat's-paw. Sophia never quite understood her son. He was an insurgent in more ways than one. The preceding winter he had startled his friends and relatives by leaving college and starting to work on one of his stepfather's street railways. His reason, that he wanted to work himself up from the bottom.

And he had queer ideas, too, according to his mother. Only that morning, at the breakfast table, when his stepfather introduced the subject of marriage, he had switched off on something entirely foreign to marital affairs. Sophia disliked business discussions at the breakfast table. Royal's bold declaration, as she recalled it now, was something like this: "No business however big can survive except it serves the common good and promotes the general welfare of the public."


* * * * *

It was high noon when Sophia and Carrie joined Aaron on the *Golden Fleece*. Aaron's face was lined with furrows and his shoulders stooped. His lips were thin, but he had a tremendous jaw, a fighting jaw. His hair was sparse, and quite gray. He was conversing with Captain Xydias, a Greek sea dog, in command of the yacht, when Sophia and her sister arrived. The captain was both commander and bodyguard. Aaron, with his enormous responsibilities, had many enemies; his greatest enemy, the public, whose earnings he filched.

Royal brought Mrs. Van Mater and Jolanda to the yacht in a trim electric launch. Luncheon was to be served on board at one. Aaron welcomed his guests, and then excused himself, to inform the ladies, as he expressed it.

Mrs. Van Mater finally found herself alone in the saloon, which was done in white and silver. Girlish laughter floated in on the salt-laden breeze, which swayed the soft, silken curtains. Jolanda made a very pretty picture as she leaned over the gunwale, exchanging pleasantries with Royal. This was her coming-out year. She was seventeen, and as exquisitely made as a Dresden china piece, with an abundance of hair that was golden and full of subtle tints in the bright sunshine. She had a doll face, white and pinkish like wax, and big blue eyes. She looked like an animated French doll, in her summery aureole of filmy things.

The week-end at Tranquility Towers, the luncheon on board the *Golden Fleece*, was a matter of business with Mrs. Van Mater, not a social episode. She was passing through a terrible ordeal. Pending penury was taking on grim, fantastic shapes. An equity of over half a million dollars, above all encumbrances, had shrunk to less than three thousand dollars. All she possessed in the world was Meadow Lodge, a small and old-fashioned cottage at Newport, after months of extensive litigation and mismanagement. The world knew that the late Philip Van Mater had drugged



and drank himself to death; but the world did not know as yet of the shrinkage of the Van Mater possessions. The humiliating knowledge had come to her less than a week ago from the transfer tax appraisers.

So, without advice or counsel, she had come to Aaron Shuttles for aid. Suspicion and distrust clothed all those who had been in her husband's employ, and mixed up in the subsequent management of the estate. She must keep up appearances in the face of misfortune, for hers was a kingdom hedged in with class distinction, unwritten laws, pride and tradition. The world owed her a life of luxury and ease for another year, for the proper presentation of her daughter to society,—such was her mental poise, and she meant to have it at any cost.

Her price—that was it—her price. She had everything the house of Shuttles lacked—social position, the aristocracy of many generations of gentle breeding. Theirs was the aristocracy of wealth. They were rank outsiders—vulgarians. Money—it would provide for all that she lacked to launch Jolanda on the social sea.

After luncheon it took Mrs. Van Mater some time to get down to business, simply from the fact that she knew nothing at all about business methods. She was facing a situation tremendously new, and when she went at it, it was in a rather roundabout way; all desultory and purposeless in-

telligence to Aaron, the ogre, who was nursing a strong desire to sink his fangs into this lady of social rank.

"And so I've come to you, Mr. Shuttles, for counsel," Mrs. Van Mater said finally. She sat in the saloon, facing Aaron; Sophia was seated a little to one side. She concluded: "My daughter must have her day."

"In brief, then, you have come to me for financial assistance." Aaron spoke abruptly.

"I'm sure I said counsel," returned Mrs. Van Mater, in a panic of retreat.

"How would fifty thousand dollars strike you?" Aaron came to the point with a bang.

"Oh, dear, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Mater, fairly staggered at the offer. "I should never be able to pay the interest on that amount. All I own in the world is my cottage at Newport, and it is terribly run down. Really, I have nothing to pledge. . . ."

"But there are other terms on which we might discuss a loan," Aaron put in quickly. "There is such a thing, you know, as social interest."

That was Mrs. Van Mater's idea exactly; the very thing she was leading up to. She was rather surprised at Aaron's intuition; he was a very clever man to anticipate her move.

On the table before her lay a check for ten thousand dollars. She had pledged her cottage as security, and agreed to use her best efforts to the

end that Aaron and Sophia should share the social functions and plans which she, by reason of her birth and culture, was entitled to enjoy. She had affixed her signature to a formal contract, drawn up on the spot by Aaron, who had advanced the date. She had saved the day for Jolanda, and herself from the horrors of adversity, for a year at least.

Aaron chuckled inwardly. Mrs. Van Mater's mission all through had been as evident as the aristocratic nose on her face. Meadow Lodge was no questionable security; he had looked it up the day pending her arrival.

Up to this moment, Sophia had been sitting in watchful waiting. The deal completed, with the formalities of the mortgage business, execution and delivery, and final payment of the loan, set for the morrow, she decided that it was high time to have her say. To her mind, the most important phase of the transaction had been overlooked. Turning to Mrs. Van Mater, she said: "There's another matter, a very serious matter, that my husband seems to have overlooked. I thought perhaps . . ."

"Oh, what's the use of bringing that up now?" Aaron broke in. "I'm sure Mrs. Van Mater has had quite enough business for one day."

The sound of voices broke the momentary tenseness; the voices of Jolanda and Royal. Mrs. Van Mater glanced at Aaron, and then at Sophia, then

she said, with quick intuition: "We must not allow ourselves to place the slightest significance on the pleasant friendship that exists between my daughter and your son."

Sophia, having no wealth of resource, might have lost her point if Aaron had not come quickly to her rescue. He said: "We are very proud of our son, and now that the subject has been broached, I have no hesitancy in saying that we, that is, my wife and I, have every reason to believe that your charming daughter has encouraged his attentions."

"No, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Mater, appalled at the suddenness of the subject. "I have bound myself by signature to pay the price that circumstances force me to pay, but to plot against my daughter's happiness . . . never." She rose, and, leaning over the table, thrust the check away from her, then started for the door.

Aaron, anticipating her move, confronted Mrs. Van Mater before she reached the door. "My dear lady," he said with extreme suavity, "please listen to reason. We have no designs upon your daughter's happiness. The subject came up, like the loan, as a business proposition, pure and simple. Probably we have taken too much for granted, but we are very ambitious, Sophia and I. Society and finance are closely allied these days, why not our sons and daughters? Would it not be more advantageous for us to make our social

enterprise more lasting? We have just as much at stake as you. We are planning to occupy our new house on Fifth Avenue this Fall, erected at a vast expenditure, and we shouldn't like to feel that the portals to your world are to be closed against us entirely. If the young couple are in love with each other, should we not encourage them?" He cleared his throat. "Now, just to prove to you that my intentions are honest, I shall destroy all proof of your written pledge." So saying, he tore the contract into a thousand bits.

This was rather melodramatic on Aaron's part, but an act quite necessary to make any impression upon Mrs. Van Mater, in her present state of feelings. Presently she said: "Give me time to think, to reconsider, perhaps."

Royal piloted Mrs. Van Mater and Jolanda to The Towers, and met no further obstacle in starting off on his quest of Jenny, at the appointed hour. Once they were alone, Mrs. Van Mater sought to measure the depth of her daughter's regard for Royal. "After all," she concluded, "he's a good sort, and will make some girl very happy."

"Royal is easily managed as a friend," said Jolanda. "As a husband, I should imagine he would be putty-like, and perfectly pliable, for he's so terribly good-natured. Anyhow, like myself, he's too young to think seriously of marriage."

At the close of the conversation, Mrs. Van

Mater saw her way clear to reconsider the proposition as advanced by the Shuttles, and in her resolve she was fallaciously subtle. While pretending to favor the match between Royal and her daughter, she could busy herself casting nets for larger fry, a title, perhaps. With money to float the debutante, coupled with Jolanda's charm and peculiar type of beauty, she felt assured of marrying her daughter off handsomely within the year.

CHAPTER V

THE blackbirds feasted that afternoon on crushed corn, strewn all the way from the tall birch tree at the edge of the woods to Jenny's lodge in the trees; yet enough corn remained at four o'clock to resemble a broken strand of topaz. Royal, having crossed the cove in his canoe, picked up the trail with great elation. Expectancy gave him wings as he scrambled up the ladder to the lodge. He found it empty; the bird had flown.

Then, through the heavy leafage, somewhere vague, rose a trill of human lips and tongue. Turning at the foot of the ladder, Royal glimpsed a slender figure through a cleft in the low-hanging foliage. Away he dashed in Jenny's direction, and away she ran, like the spirit of the woods, like a joyous feathered thing. The joy of the chase was upon Royal. By wonderful strides and leaps he gained her side just as she paused, panting for breath, under an opening among the trees, where she stood shimmering, and as delicately

poised as a fairy on a mossy knoll, in a spotlight of sunshine. Shakespeare could not have dreamed of a prettier picture. It was a midsummer day's dream. Pulsing, mad, innocent youth, with dream clouds overhead and flowers under foot.

No formalities now; no "please, may I have the next waltz;" no "kindly pass the jam." Earth and its conventions slid from under their feet; they stood like two untamed creatures, with gossamer wings, poised on the petal of a lily bell in the wilderness. The mood of the victor and the vanquished in the chase, all that was youthful and primitive, clothed them like a soft garment of leaves.

On a carpet of moss, interwoven with curious designs of fern and lichen, and bordered with wood violets, they sat side by side. For once in her life Jenny had no forebodings, no apprehension of the afterwards. This was her hour. She had come into her heritage, the heritage of every girl. Love, which knocked at the gates of palaces, had knocked at her humble door, and she had let it come in. Love had clothed her in royal garments, and placed a gem of great price on her forehead; she was indeed a king's daughter.

Royal was conscious of the end of the quest of his youth. In the very springtime of life, he had never felt just that way before.

The west wind, trailing through the trees, seemed to command the leaves to turn their faces

away at the tender scene. When the maple leaves turn their faces, it is said to be a sign of weeping weather. Jenny remembered the unfailing omen; she also noted that the sun had slid down behind the trees.

"The sunshine has gone," she said with a sigh.

"Love laughs at time," said Royal.

"Then it is love," murmured Jenny. "I love you . . . and you love me. Isn't it . . . wonderful?"

"Our love is new, and yet it is as old as the eternal hills. Love is built on faith. You must never doubt me, and I shall always put my trust in you. Then we shall be strong in our love, so strong that nothing can ever tear us apart." As he spoke, his face seemed strangely illumed. "My princess," he continued, as he crouched at Jenny's feet; "behold a poor beggar, hungry for love."

"Ah, but you are my prince come true," said Jenny, with a strange light glowing in her melting eyes. "We are kingly children." She paused, for she was thinking of the little shepherd boy in the fairy tale, famed for his wise sayings. Then she repeated the following: "'There is a great mountain scemewhere, one mile high, one mile wide, and one mile deep; and to this mountain there comes a bird once in a thousand years, that rubs its beak against the mountain; and when the whole mountain shall be rubbed away, then shall I lose my faith in you.'"


"I'm sort of a two-sided individual," Royal said after a little. "One side for the formalities and business, and on the other side, ambitions to serve humanity, books, dreams . . . and you."

"I was told once in a dream," said Jenny, "that love was a pilgrimage. A fairy prince told me. Why, it must have been you, for you wore the very same boots the other night in the tableaux."

"I knew we had met before, somewhere," Royal enthused. "I've been dreaming of a little slender girl like you ever since I can remember. She was always running away from me, as you did to-day when I espied you through the trees. Not a day or night passed but that I've been on the quest of this airy, fairy princess. And it was you all the time, you with your raven hair and wondrous eyes. It must have been you, for my little girl dwelt among the trees and flowers, in sight of the sea."

They were standing now, hand in hand, wind-swept under darkling trees, with the shadows lengthening about them. Remembering her dream, Jenny said: "Now, hand in hand, we shall go over the hills, in quest of happiness."

So, hand in hand, they walked to the summit of Heavenly Hill, where they watched the sun go down in a blaze of glory. Not a thought, not a word, of Jolanda, of the social gulf that yawned between them, of the cruel and wicked world that throbbed beyond the flaming colors in the west.



The birds had gone to rest. Presently the stars were glimmering over the roof of trees. They walked to the edge of the woods. Far below a light twinkled in Nancy's cottage. The geese, flapping their wings, looked like spectres in the gathering gloom. Coming closer to the pond, a star gleamed in the still waters, as though it had fallen from the sky. Jenny was for picking it up.

They talked very low now, like night birds cooing, in their great love. Plans were formulated for secret meetings. By this time Jenny had told all she knew about herself, and Royal, in return, had confided in Jenny all that was necessary for her to know. Like a good woman, yielding and unafraid, Jenny bared her soul, and the half had not been told. She knew that on the third day from this Royal was to bring her a band of beaten gold—that was all she cared to know.

She watched her make-believe prince until he became a part of the essence of twilight, and was no more. Was it all a mad dream, this madcap night? Whether or no, she slept that night in a royal bedchamber, hung with rare tapestries, and dreamed . . . and dreamed.

Several days later Nancy gave a beach party for the Professor. The old lady had suddenly taken up with the new order of things, and was really putting on airs. She sat enthroned under the Professor's big umbrella while he and Jenny waded in the surf. Then Royal happened along,

as if by accident, and Jenny passed successfully through the scene of being formally introduced to her fiancé; although she thought she saw a knowing twinkle in the Professor's eyes.

Nancy was agreeably impressed with Royal, and squinted at him over her blue goggles. "A very handsome young man," she whispered to Jenny. "And what nice legs he's got."

She put on the airs of a dowager when she conversed with Royal. "I do wish you'd call on us," she remarked. "I'm a feeble old woman, and I've had my day, but I can't resist a nice young man like yourself. And that's a very pretty compliment for a descendant of the English Cromwells to pay, especially to a young man who hasn't many clothes on." Royal was still wet from his swim across the breakwater from the private beach at the foot of the cliff.

Royal, accompanied by Gene, called at the cottage later in the afternoon. Jenny played a suite of flower songs for him, all simple melodies, that told the story of the tulip, the daisy, the violet, and the snowdrop. Then she made him acquainted with her line of ancestry on the walls, and initiated him into the intricacies of the carpet loom. They had a few minutes to themselves while Nancy showed Gene her new flower garden.

The pain of first parting was theirs. "The other side of me is calling," comforted Royal.

"But I shall soon return to claim you as my own."

Judging from their seriousness, Royal might have been leaving on a trip to the polar sea. As a matter of fact, he was simply going to Newport on the *Golden Fleece* for the week-end, with his mother and stepfather.

After Royal and Gene had gone, Jenny hurried up to the attic, and there she told the secrets, the longings, the throbbings of her heart, to the fiddle, her only confidant.

CHAPTER VI

PLANS for Mrs. Van Mater's Garden Ball assumed definiteness following her return from Tranquility Towers. She came back to Newport like a new woman, reanimated, armed for the social fray. Moses-like, she had struck the rock (the rock signifying Aaron Shuttles), and gold, like water, had gushed therefrom. The horror of adversity had passed. The present was her own, though bought at a price; one solid year of ease and luxury, so dear to her aristocratic soul, and so necessary for the proper exploitation of her daughter. She blinded herself to the extremity to which she had been forced. As for the aftermath, she did not seem to mind, although she knew that she would have to bear the brunt of the consequences. The Livingwells, her paternal relatives, the von Huysens, her maternal kin, were almost extinct as a family, and the Van Maters were quite defunct, with the exception of a few obscure cousins here and there.

The ball was not only designed to mark Jolanda's formal presentation to society, but to prove to a doubting world that Mrs. Van Mater's income had not been materially affected by the shrinkage of her deceased husband's estate.

There were five mammas at Meadow Lodge for tea on the afternoon preceding the ball, five fond mothers of debutantes, who, by a process of mental deduction, had guessed the motive of Mrs. Van Mater's week-end trip to Tranquility Towers. One mamma knew to a certainty that Mrs. Van Mater had lost everything. The second mamma happened to know something anent the social ambitions of Ma and Pa Shuttles. Then the third mamma broached the name of Royal as "the good-looking chap who chums with Kennard Van Rensselaer"; while the fourth mamma, putting two and two together, exclaimed: "Royal Renshaw is a son of this Shuttles woman by a former marriage, and everybody knows he's sweet on Jolanda." Then spoke the fifth mamma, and if a bomb had suddenly been dropped in their midst by a Zeppelin, the result of her statement could not have been more prolific of verbal pyrotechnics. "The Shuttles arrived this morning on the *Golden Fleece*, and are staying at the Primrose Cottage." So saying, the fifth mamma closed her mouth like a trap.

So this pushing Shuttles woman, this quantity from the West Side, was in their very midst. For

a moment there was silence (Mrs. Van Mater had been called to the telephone), the awful silence that follows the detonation of a powerful explosive. When the smoke cleared away, every mamma, figuratively speaking, was in her war paint, and in her hand, a little hatchet, for the defense of Mrs. Van Mater and the annihilation of Mrs. Shuttles. Sisterly sympathy fairly oozed from each of the mammas for one of their own, who had, no doubt, been duped by a couple of vulgar creatures.

They sounded Mrs. Van Mater on her return. What did she think of Tranquility Towers? . . . Mrs. Van Mater thought it a very attractive place. Jolanda had met many of her young friends there—she mentioned them by name: the Sargent and Greenough girls, the Chislettes, the Van Rensselaer boy, and Royal Renshaw. . . . By the way, who is Royal Renshaw? . . . Oh, he was really a very nice boy. . . . His parents? . . . Well, his stepfather was a big man in his world, street railways and suburban realty. Surely, everybody knew of the wonderful projects of Aaron Shuttles. . . . Then the Shuttles did not care for society? . . . Oh, dear, no; they seemed bored to death with any sort of formalities. They were frightfully rich, and lived magnificently to themselves. Indeed, it took a lot of persuasion, Mrs. Van Mater concluded, to induce them to come to Newport for the Garden Ball.

Meadow Lodge, set well back in a wooded acreage, glowed like a jewel on the night of the ball. Gaily colored lanterns gleamed among the trees like huge glowworms. Everybody seemed to be there; at least everybody worth knowing. The older set, buffeted and disillusioned, in the pursuit of that which they had lost; the younger set, reckless and extravagant with what was theirs. A golden moon, as round as a cheese, hung in a star-studded sky.

Mrs. Van Mater, garbed as a blackbird, received at the foot of the hanging staircase. Jolanda, masquerading as a ladybird, stood beside her mother, and was kissed on the cheek by a dozen or so impetuous dowagers, the tribute of crabbed age to youth. The quintette of mammas, who assisted in receiving, were costumed alike, representing green gooseberries. They exchanged glances when Royal was announced. But at that moment a loud noise, like an explosion, diverted everybody's attention. Calm was restored when it became known that the newspaper photographers were setting off flashlight powders as the guests arrived. In an extra brilliant flash, Sophia was revealed in the costume of a carrot, and her sister, Carrie, as a wild strawberry. Aaron brought up the rear in the garb of a gray wolf, which gave Mrs. Van Mater quite a start. It was the only costume available at the local costumier, and he had worn it, in spite of his wife's protestation.

Royal, like many of the younger men, did not appear in fancy costume.

As Sophia advanced towards Mrs. Van Mater, she remembered Wilkins's parting instructions: "Be formal, look bored, and never speak unless you are spoken to." Mrs. Van Mater murmured, under her breath: "So glad you've come." Sophia meant to say something about the weather—always a safe subject, when she found herself pushed along the line by the press of arriving guests. She finally found herself marooned, along with Aaron and Carrie, directly in front of the five mammas. Under the critical stare of ten female eyes, the temperature of that warm summer's night must have dropped twenty degrees. Sophia shivered, turned, and led the way to the lawn, where the young people were dancing on a platform erected under a marquee.

"Let's go home," said Sophia, the moment she found herself out of the range of five raised lorgnons.

"Gooseberries and icebergs," asserted Carrie, with an affected shiver.

"And to think that we're paying for all this," said Sophia in a guttural voice.

Aaron felt like a man without a country, and was freely perspiring under the heavy fur. As he expressed himself to his wife: "I'm damned hot, Ma." Then Sophia said: "Well, you would wear it, Pa, so try and keep cool." Carrie sug-

gested that he go back of the house and take it off.

They wandered here and there, through the house, and about the lawn. Nobody paid the slightest attention to them. Mrs. Van Mater was conspicuous by her absence, as if she feared this crafty wolf, prowling about her premises. Once they glimpsed Royal . . . he was dancing with Jolanda. A few minutes later they saw a distinguished-looking chap, whom somebody called Prince Paul, cut in, and finish the dance with Jolanda. Said Sophia: "Even our son is ashamed of us. He never comes near us. He might at least introduce us to his friends."

"But people are never introduced at affairs of this sort," proclaimed Carrie. "They are supposed to know each other. Sometimes it takes a whole season at Newport before people even begin to notice one, so I've been told."

The cruelest blow of all came the next morning. The Shuttles were not mentioned in the glowing accounts, in the metropolitan press, even as "among those present." This was a catastrophe for Sophia, and it sent her to bed with a splitting headache. As Wilkins had said: "What fun it will be to wake up and find oneself in the picture press." Carrie was in the dumps. Aaron, taking a more optimistic view of the situation, realized that it took some men years to accomplish what he had achieved in less than a week.

Wilkins was puzzled. She could not understand why her personal note to the society editors of the leading New York papers, asking them to add the names of Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Shuttles to the list of guests at Mrs. Van Mater's Garden Ball, should their local correspondent overlook them, had been ignored. Perhaps they expected something with more news value from Newport. News, that was it. If she could only unearth something that might figure as news and benefit her employers in the end. She knew the oftener she got Sophia's name in the papers, the better chance she stood for an increase in wages.

While thinking the matter over, she dropped into a small, out-of-the-way church for the morning service. She went to pray; she came away with a rattling good story. Undoubtedly Wilkins had a nose for news; she had missed her calling. She heard the rector denounce Newport society; she heard him call down the righteous wrath of Heaven upon the Babylonian orgies of the social-elect. He dwelt particularly upon the desecration of the early hours of that very Sabbath morning. How young society men and women, mellow with wine, had greeted the dawn with maudlin ceremonies, and mocked at the devout worshippers on their way to early mass. "A Garden Ball?" the rector thundered. "It was a bacchanalian revel!"

That afternoon Wilkins telegraphed a detailed account of the rector's sermon to the *New York*

Trumpet, relating how he had censured society, and publicly denounced Mrs. Van Mater's ball. By doing this, she scored what is known in the newspaper world as a "beat." Next morning the story was splashed all over the front page, to the delight of the public, which loves to wallow in the scandal and depravity of society. Cartoons appeared in the evening papers of parsons denouncing the reckless abandon of the rich. There were also satirical editorials, and long-winded interviews with the rectors of the leading churches in New York. Everybody seemed glad of the chance to take a whack at poor society.

Then it was that Wilkins played her winning hand. In her first report she had not mentioned the Shuttles. Meantime, the city editor of the *Trumpet* had telegraphed instructions for a "second day" story, the local correspondent having to all intents been disregarded. So in the second day report she brought Sophia very cleverly to the front. Sophia in the headlines. Sophia squashing the parson.

Did the wrathful but righteous reverence know that the Amalgamated Cab Drivers' Association, Council No. 21, had given a masquerade ball on the same night as Mrs. Van Mater's affair? Did he know that the cab drivers' ball had lasted until dawn, and that the beer tipsy guests had roamed the streets, carousing, and flinging empty beer bottles right and left? Evidently he knew noth-

ing of the sort. Nor had he taken the trouble to ascertain that Mrs. Van Mater's Garden Ball had been an early function, and that the guests had all departed by midnight. Besides, Mrs. Van Mater had served neither wine nor champagne, only lemonade.

This information was set forth in the form of an interview with Mrs. Aaron Shuttles, and a flashlight picture appeared with the article, showing Sophia in the fantastic garb of a carrot, thus proving to a doubting world that she had been an honored guest at the much-talked-about ball. Incidentally, it was related how Mr. and Mrs. Shuttles had arrived at Newport, on board the *Golden Fleece*, after having entertained Mrs. Van Mater and her debutante daughter at Tranquility Towers. Brief mention was also made of the wonderful house on Fifth Avenue, the future home of the Shuttles. One paper lost its head and went so far as to call Sophia "society's favorite." Her name was on everyone's lips. Surely her courage in squashing the parson deserved some monumental tribute. Had not the parson already offered a public apology?

The effect of all this on society was not as electrical as Sophia, and Wilkins, too, hoped it might be. Society was so accustomed to having its pleasures, even the simplest of them, misrepresented in the press, that little heed was paid to the flutter in the outside world. It had not been the

first time that strangers had come into its midst, seeking notoriety at its expense.

As for Mrs. Van Mater, she never paid the slightest attention to the public slander of society, although it was very nice, very thoughtful, indeed, of Sophia to prove what the rector said was wrong. After all, it really didn't matter. She made this languid statement to Sophia over the telephone (Sophia had called personally, twice, in great state, at Meadow Lodge, but in each instance she was told that Mrs. Van Mater was out). All the encouragement she got from Mrs. Van Mater, via telephone, was this: "Perhaps you'll be coming over later, for the horse show." By prerogative of compromise, Mrs. Van Mater should have been crawling at Sophia's feet. The truth was: Mrs. Van Mater had flunked.

On top of all this, poor Sophia was worried almost to distraction over the erratic conduct of her son. Royal had gone off yachting the first thing Sunday morning, after the ball, and when next she heard from him, it was through a brief telegraphic message sent from Tranquility. No cause for alarm. He had been taken by a chill on board his friend's yacht, and thought best to return to The Towers.

She had tried to draw him out on the marriage question while on their way to Newport. She remembered his saying this: "The true qualities of love are initiative and affection, which every young

man and every young woman should be allowed to cultivate themselves." Then she recalled what her husband had said: "I don't think young people should marry too soon in life." But this was said more as a bait than anything else. Then Royal had declared, with unmistakable passion in his voice: "Edgar Allen Poe married Virginia Clews, a girl of thirteen, while Cicero contracted a second marriage with a maid of fourteen. Beatrice was a child of nine years when Dante first saw and fell in love with her. She was the inspiration of his 'Divine Comedy.' "

Royal was in love; in love with someone very young, who did not, like Jolanda, share his gift of circumstance. What was to be done? Sophia felt that she was desperately facing the worst that could happen. Her master project was toppling on its last support.

CHAPTER VII

"THIS is the era of big things, my boy." So said Aaron Shuttles as he sat on a deck chair of sea grass, with the inevitable cigar butt clenched between his teeth, and in his hand, a palm leaf fan, moving to and fro, slowly, ceaselessly, for the night was stifling. The *Golden Fleece*, as white as a ghost, swung at anchor in the still waters of the cove. Royal lounged in a chair, facing his stepfather, the fire of his cigarette marking his location like the phosphorescent glow of a fire-fly.

Aaron continued: "Big things mean coming together instead of working separately. To obtain the greatest results, there must be a combination of brains and power, and the wherewithal to apply it to the best advantage." A pause. "You are approaching manhood now pretty fast."

"Twenty-one on October fifteenth," said Royal, flipping the fire from the end of his cigarette.

"I am growing old," Aaron went on. "Somebody must step into my shoes some day. I hope

for great things from you." He cleared his throat. "You seem to be ambitious."

Royal leaned back in his chair, where the soft light from a swinging lantern illumined his features, finely cut features, with the mouth of an idealist and the eyes of a dreamer. Through the indistinctness of the night, the hard-faced financier gazed with eager longing upon the young man with a vision.

Aaron was as keenly alive to the possibilities of his stepson as he was to his own cold-blooded methods and shameless plundering, long justified by facts. If the public had picked him out as a conspicuous offender in his endless variety of traction and realty enterprises, surely he had the strong mental grasp to meet their demands without any financial strain. His set purpose now, to change from the attitude of dominating ownership to friendly partnership with his stepson. By pushing Royal to the front he could stem the rising tide of outraged public opinion. Royal, in fact, was his only salvation. While the visionary ideas of his stepson—of serving the common good and promoting the general welfare of the public, might conflict with his own, the need of him was immediate. The public would put their trust in Royal. What more inspiring figure to flaunt before them than a clean young man, fresh from college, who had their welfare at heart? Had Royal not worn overalls and carried a dinner pail?

What power lurked in that dinner pail, symbolic of simple service for the good of the people. It had controlled the destinies of a great nation, created statesmen. The dinner pail was inconceivably tremendous. Royal's ideas were dinner pail ideas—they stood for the promise of reform, for splendid achievement.

Said Royal, rousing himself from his dreams: "As to my ambitions, I think I've given expression more than once on the question of operating great utilities solely in the public interest, and the efficiency of common-carrier service. The people have a right to know what the railways are doing and how they are doing it."

Then Aaron spoke. "It takes a strongminded man nowadays to crowd into the conduct and operation of a big corporation something that would conflict with his fellow manipulators."

"On the other hand," remarked Royal, "no one man, however rich in mental grasp or earnest in intent to seek the best results for all, can be intrusted safely with the unrestrained control and direction of great properties."

"You have the courage of your convictions," said Aaron, amused.

"So has the public," Royal spoke up quickly, "especially as regards the Shuttles Interurban Company. It clamors against the lack of obligation of trusteeship. The shareholders insist upon the proper protection of their investments. The

public demand improved transportation service."

"The clamor of the public," said Aaron, wagging his finger at Royal, "like the visions of youth, often lead to blunders, sometimes financial catastrophes." He smiled. "The public and press accuse me of cruel plundering and betrayal of trusts. In an hour of sinister significance I turn to you for counsel . . . a remedy perhaps."

Royal was not wholly without resource. He replied: "The sacrifice of selfish interests for the good of the public. The administration and operation of your enterprises without secret profits to insiders, and the moulding of public opinion without spending thousands in politics."

"Well, now," exclaimed Aaron, rubbing the palms of his hands together, "that sounds like good common sense. Your aspirations are commendable to say the least, certainly law-abiding. I dare say you have other ideas up your sleeve."

"Lots of them," replied Royal with enthusiasm; "and I have courage, too. You see, I was hardly prepared to express myself to-night on the existing economic and political conditions as I understand them, nor have I given you a lucid idea of my methods for reform. You took me a little un-
aware."

"A question of preparedness, eh?" asserted Aaron, beaming. "Well, my boy, you have not sown your seed on stony ground." He stood up. "It is with great pleasure and a fatherly pride

that I am privileged to offer you the post of associate managership in the great Shuttles system."

Royal had not expected this. The offer almost took his breath away. "Why, pater," he mumbled, rising to his feet, "I had no idea you were counting on me for such a big job as that. . . . Associate Manager. Are you sure that I'm fitted for such a responsible position? Besides"—he was gaining his mental equilibrium—"I am not so sure that my ideas would dovetail into yours at all. It's one thing to discuss them, and quite another to put them into effect."

Aaron laid his hand gently on his stepson's shoulder. "Peaceful reorganization is what I am striving for," he said. "The public is already acquainted with the dinner-pail episode in your life, and you would become very popular in a short time. The stockholders will welcome your entry into the business of administration. You will act as a tonic on the entire situation. A most important position I should say, whereby to rehabilitate the traction railways and enhance their earning powers. Of course you will accept?"

Royal accepted with something like reverence in his tone. His dream was coming true. Already he felt the great utilities in his own hands; his cherished aim of conducting and operating them for the promotion of the public interests, a reality. He was deeply stirred. No doubt the

public had misjudged his stepfather. Perhaps all the clamor had arisen from the general lowering of tone in public and business life, following the recent revelations of misdeeds and lawlessness in some of the other big corporations.

“He followed his stepfather into the deck cabin, where he signed a memorandum of agreement to take up the position of associate manager on his twenty-first birthday.

Deep down in his heart the magnate knew that associate manager, as a post of responsibility, meant little or nothing. He had created the position to meet the expediency of the moment. The young man with a vision could have no part in the big business of life. There was no room for fancy frills. Business was all bluff and bluster, and the smiting with swords that bite deep.

For a moment Aaron's hopes transcended his achievement. The Shuttles system of suburban street railways and suburban development would reap a world of benefit even though Royal had no hand in the actual administration. He would be allowed just so much latitude and no more. At first he would be entrusted to specializing in the social service of the employees. That would occupy his visions for some months to come. The future . . . well, Aaron felt doubly certain of that.

What was said after the formal agreement had been drawn up fell like an anti-climax. The

Golden Fleece had been provisioned for Aaron's annual autumnal cruise, often lasting two months, or six weeks at least. It was to inspect the provisions that brought Aaron and his stepson to the yacht after a late dinner at The Towers. Royal was not to accompany the family on the cruise, but he had consented to make the week-end trip to Newport. This was Wednesday night. On Friday morning the yacht was to leave for Newport, and to expedite an early start, the family was to pass the night on board.

Aaron began by lamenting Royal's absence on the cruise. "You really should accompany us," he said, "if only to look after your Ma and Aunt Carrie. An old-world proverb has it that a bag of fleas is easier to keep watch over than a woman. But your Ma is glad anyway that you're going as far as Newport with us. Very nice of Mrs. Van Mater to ask us over for the horse show. Nice girl . . . Jolanda." His voice was soft and purring. Then: "A moment ago you spoke of the right of the public to know what the railways are doing and how they are doing it. If this be true, then have not parents the same right, really more-so, to exercise the same jurisdiction over their son, especially when he wanders off frequently and never gives an account of himself? Mothers in particular seem to exact that sort of thing."

"You are rather vague, pater," said Royal with a smile, at the same time suppressing his surprise

at the supposition advanced. "I am keenly alive to my obligations to you and the mater."

"Sophia and I hope to see you make a brilliant match some day," Aaron persisted.

"One never knows when the right girl will come along," returned Royal musingly.

Aaron leaned forward in his chair. "Your Ma has got it into her head somehow," he said, "that you are paying court to some girl around these parts unbeknown to her."

"Ridiculous." Royal smiled.

A delicate situation confronted him. Would it not have been better, he thought, to have declared, once and for all, that he loved nobody but Jenny, and nobody but Jenny would he have? How really helpless he was. "Well, at any rate," he concluded, "my career has been settled upon." He was walking up and down the cabin. "I shall certainly make good on my job." He paused by the reading table.

A moment of tense silence followed. Royal's face, under the amber glow of the ceiling light, seemed to shine with a strange radiance. He was seeing visions. He saw himself in the office of the Shuttles system. He saw himself fighting for this and that, always on the side of the public. He saw himself an earnest public worker and philanthropist. The people in time would look upon him as an authority on public franchises, labor legislation, and wage earners' insurance.

Presently he said: "You know, pater, it is no light thing for a man to be accused of betraying the public trust, a trust which should have been held sacred."

Aaron banged the table with his fist. "The public trust is a hollow mockery," he growled. "Public morals are corrupt. Criminality in others has been the public's cry ever since the world began."

"Nevertheless, I think it necessary for the protection of the public that a man who betrays the public trust should be fully tried, and if found guilty, punished as the law provides." Royal spoke with animated fervor.

Aaron laughed—it was a guffaw. "My boy," he said, "you will live to learn that nothing fades away so quickly in the presence of powerful interests as strong personal opinions. Yet even a man who believes, as you do, that great utilities should be operated solely in the public interest, and the betrayal of such interests a fit matter for the attention of the law, even such a man may perform good service in the offices of advanced finance."

As Royal walked away from the table, Aaron chuckled to himself. During their brief conversation in the cabin he had studied closely his stepson's face. Surely a weak, almost womanish face, with gentle eyes. Yet Royal's animated fervor as he had expressed his opinions had taken him

by surprise. For a moment he had feared that vague something, underneath the texture of dreams, that had fired his stepson with spirit and vigor. It would take a year perhaps to mould this youth, to lower his conformity to right, to shatter his visions.

Royal, meantime, had approached a curtained door which opened into a small writing room, where Aaron carried on his voluminous correspondence while cruising. The cabin seemed very hot and stuffy, and in order to force a draught of air, Royal swept the curtains aside, revealing the ugly visage of Captain Xydias. He glanced at his stepfather and then at the captain. He thought: "That man has no business in there. He's been eavesdropping."

Captain Xydias, with a formal bow, made a dignified exit from the cabin, offering no explanation. After he had gone Aaron sought to make matters clear. "The captain wished to write a letter, so I gave him permission to use my secretaire. I had forgotten he was in there."

Still, Royal clung to the idea that he was being spied upon. The idea was preposterous. He said so to himself as he left the launch at the dock to walk to the hotel. Had he not covered his tracks most carefully? Yet something had aroused his mother's curiosity. He could not conceive of her stooping to any sort of cunning. Never before to-night had he felt his utter helplessness so

keenly. With all his strength of noble purpose he was subservient to his next of kin. His social obligations, the uncertainty of his future, his lack of cash, were barriers that blocked his way to happiness. Over and again that night he retraced his footsteps from the burning pit to Arcady as many a youth has done. And yet somehow he felt poised for fight as the invisible forces gathered around him.

But what of Jenny? What of the morrow?

CHAPTER VIII

ROYAL awoke with a fixed purpose in his mind, and he encountered no obstacles at the onset in carrying out his plan.

"There is a fair country where eternal summertime reigns, and we have reached its borderland." With this rather vague remark he sought to prepare Jenny for what was coming.

They sat on a blanket of green, under an ancient and lonesome oak tree. Below them, nestling in the valley, shone the white cottages of Middle Village. Above them, the cumulus clouds rode in majestic pageant—chariots, camels, horses, elephants, against a background of deepest turquoise.

Threading their way through winding creeks by canoe, they had reached the outskirts of this small settlement, of peculiar isolation, situated five miles due north of Tranquility.

"Our love is real. No mere substance of dreams, of things hoped for . . . it is ours for keeps."

Royal was leading Jenny as gently as he knew

how along a path that would not end in luminous vagueness, but project into the deeper things of life. He continued:

"Yet it may not be so secure as we imagine. Our happiness is menaced by tragic forces. We must outwit them."

Jenny gave a little gasp. "But how?" she asked, innocently enough. Thereupon, Royal divulged his plan.

It pained Royal deeply to tell Jenny he would be obliged to depart that night, and it was all Jenny could do to keep back the flood of tears, even with the gates of Paradise suddenly open to her unaccustomed feet. But after he had related just how their love was threatened, she was quite willing to enter into the gentle conspiracy of marriage to outwit the tragic forces.

"When I was a small boy," Royal was saying, "I saw a red top in a shop window. Oh, how I wanted that top! I only had a few pennies, so I paid a deposit. The shopkeeper declared the top was as good as mine, and put it away for safe keeping. That night I dreamed of tops, pretty red tops. The next day I hurried back to the shop and paid the balance due. I was the happiest boy in the world. The top was mine for keeps."

"How I wish I had been that little red top," said Jenny, in childish glee.

"My position now," Royal went on to explain, "is very much the same as then. You *are* the little

red top, and, oh, how I want you! When we are married you will be as good as mine, and placed away for safe keeping. All the time I am absent from your side, every hour, minute, every second, I shall dream of you. And when I come back to claim you, why, you shall be mine for keeps."

"Then we shall live happily together," declared Jenny, "like the poor goose-girl and the prince, 'so long as God suffers us to remain on earth.' That's what the story book says. Oh, we must be fairy children with such a wonderful love as ours, hiding in the forest from the ugly ogres that beset the outside world. To-morrow I shall awaken, to find it all a dream. I shall go back to my hut, to my loom. . . ."

"But not for long," Royal broke in. "Just think of the great happiness that shall await our fuller experience. Think of the world of bliss that still lies beyond us. . . . Don't you understand?"

Jenny sighed and shook her head.

"I am asking you to become my wife in name only," Royal continued. "I want to do the right thing . . . to be gentle with you . . . to be on the square. God help me, I do!"

After that, Jenny reposed in Royal's arms, as quiet as a nun, breathless with adoration. For she had seen in her lover's face that which the old masters saw when they painted the faces of the pure in heart. She remembered the scriptural line . . . "and hope maketh not ashamed."

. . . Like little children they passed over the borderland, into that fair country where eternal summertime reigns.

A white-bearded clergyman married them in the parlor of a quaint little parsonage, while the scent of the flowers and the song of the birds stole through the open windows and rested upon them like a benediction. . . . "To have and to hold . . . until death do us part." Jenny, her cheeks poppy bright, came near saying: "To have and to lose." Royal's going so soon after the ceremony was the bitter with the sweet. How could they ever crowd their love into the brief time that would elapse between sunset and moonrise?

A fat, rosy-cheeked housemaid served them tea and freshly baked biscuit, with raspberry jam, after the ceremony. The long fast had made them both ravenously hungry, for the afternoon was almost spent. Jenny's lips were stained with the crimson jam. She fussed over Royal with motherly tenderness, and kissed him on the cheek with her jam-stained lips when the parson's back was turned. It was the first time she had ever kissed Royal on her own initiative. He was quite delighted, and begged for more, but Jenny said there were no more; at least, not just then.

Then, after tea, they became deadly serious, and sat on a black haircloth sofa in the parlor while the parson gathered a bouquet of posies for Jenny. Royal started off with how nature had built him

for work, not idleness. He worked up gradually to the point where he divulged the big job he was to undertake, and Jenny thrilled with ambitions for her husband. How odd the name sounded to her. She kept repeating it to herself . . . "my husband." And what a rosy future Royal painted. To put his people off the scent, he had decided to accompany them on the cruise, instead of merely going with them to Newport for the week-end. It would be more cruel than death to part, but it was quite necessary for their future happiness. He would return before the leaves began to fall—a month maybe. Later he would proclaim their marriage. "By this time," he declared hopefully, "I shall have become a valuable asset in the affairs of the Shuttles system." He stuck his breast out proudly like a pouter pigeon.

"Oh, you are so wonderful!" said Jenny, surveying her husband with pride, then ending up by kissing him on the ear. "I'm sure you will do big things in the world, and kill off all the ogres and giants. How noble it will be to work for the good of the dear public. And I shall be waiting for you, praying for you . . . and watching for the leaves to fall."

"This leaving you all alone," spoke Royal; "that's what hurts me. This dawdling about on a luxurious yacht while you toil. I have everything and yet I have nothing. Why, if we were starving now I could not buy a square meal. I'm

a poor little rich boy." He jingled the few coins in his pocket, all that was left out of the generous fees he had paid that afternoon.

"But you are rich in dreams," soothed Jenny. "Everybody must start at the foot of the ladder, and work up to the realization of their visions. I don't mind going back to my old life so long as it serves your purpose. We have each other now, and we must wait . . . wait." She sighed.

Royal half rose on the sofa, and brought his fist down into his palm with a smacking noise. "See here, Jenny," he said with a determined tone: "I'm going to chuck the whole business, and strike out for myself. I'm going to make you happy, and I'll begin right now."

"What would you do?" Jenny asked, frightened.

"Call the pater on the telephone," replied Royal, "and tell everything. If he turns me down, all the better for us. I'll go to work, drive a truck, anything, and we'll have a little home all our own."

"Oh, but you mustn't," said Jenny excitedly. "Besides, there isn't any telephone here. I asked the clerk. I was thinking of the tragic forces and pursuit. Oh, no, no! To break away from your people now would spoil all your good chances. It's much better as it is. Then, too, I've Granny to look after. I couldn't leave her now. I can wait a year if necessary. Things will come out

all right. They do in story books, and ours is a story-book love."

"Perhaps I had better stick it out." Royal relaxed, a bit hopelessly. "But you must have better things, clothes, everything that you desire. I shall send you money the first day we touch port. I'll get it somehow. Maybe the pater will advance me something on my salary."

"I need nothing," returned Jenny wistfully. "Am I not the richest girl in all the world? I have you . . . your love. That alone clothes me in cloth of silver and gold. Oh, please don't send me money! That would make me feel beggarly. I want to be a princess in my own right, and sit at the loom, with the golden spindle in my hand, while my wonderful prince wields the sword and kills the ogres that would devour our love and happiness."

So they reached a happy conclusion just as the white-haired divine returned from the garden with a bouquet—marigolds, sweet Williams, pansies and mignonette. But once they were homeward bound something more sinister than breaking home ties and ruining bright prospects came between them. They stood no longer on the borderland of dreams, but on the broad frontier. They were man and wife.

Jenny did not feel the falsity of their position so much as Royal did. She had accepted his interpretation of their marriage vows with all the

sang-froid of innocence. As she figured it out to herself: She was the red top of Royal's boyish desire, and through the transaction of wedlock she belonged to him in one way, and in another way she didn't. Full possession would come when he returned to claim her as his very own. Just what full possession meant she had a rather vague idea. His avowed determination to be gentle with her, "to be on the square," was likewise vague. He had always been gentle with her, and yet she longed for the mastery of his arms. She longed for them now, simply because she did not wholly share his error. She was youth, pulsing, warm; the woman in her was afire.

Royal's heroism of purpose suffered a terrible jolt once he confronted the solemn responsibilities of the hour. But he pressed on in embattled faith, with cohorts gleaming, like Sir Galahad, the purest knight of the Round Table. On they hurried in the light of the dying day, with the shadows lengthening across their path. But it was a cold light that bathed them both in humbling truth.

It was as if a spectre, as black as the gathering gloom, sat between them, in the canoe, on the last lap of their journey. Royal sent the frail bark skimming over the smooth waters. Jenny crouched in one end like a lonely bird; the song on her lips had died away. Love without fulfillment was theirs. It had taken on the strength of tragedy. Even nature was flinging black clouds

against a sullen sky. A storm was brewing. Tremendous forces were astir. Gone were the birds and the sunshine; gone was the drone of the dragon fly. Terrifying night settled upon them quickly.

Everything about was oppressively still; Jenny's face as white as an ascension lily. She was deathly afraid of storms; her usual hiding place, behind the door, or underneath the bed. She clung tremulously to Royal, after they had beached the canoe, who voiced the hope that they would be able to reach Nancy's before the storm broke. They would be able to trump up some sort of an excuse. Jenny had led her Granny to believe that she was to spend the afternoon with her god-mother. It would be quite natural for her to have met Royal on her way home, and for him to escort her home.

They were in sight of Heavenly Hill when there came a vivid flash and a deafening crash. The roar of the wind in the trees could be heard from afar. Instinctively they ran for shelter under the maple trees that skirted the foot of the hill. Royal should have known better. At that instant, a gigantic oak, not so very far away, was cleft in twain by a hissing bolt of lightning. The explosion that followed fairly stunned them. Jenny stood trembling in Royal's embrace. Then it was that she thought of her lodge in the trees, at the top of the hill, the only possible protection from

the fast approaching rain. Stupid of Royal not to have thought of it before Jenny did (yet he had thought of it, and had purposely avoided going there).

Thus the storm drove them to the lodge. Nature is not moral. What did she care about this Arthurian young man and his resolve "to do the right thing?"

At the foot of the ladder Royal tossed Jenny over his shoulder as if she had been a sack of meal, and carried her up the mossgrown rungs. They had barely set foot in the lodge when the rains descended. The little house rocked like a bird's nest in the tree tops. The forest moaned under the violence of the wind. The crash of uprooted trees sounded above the tumult of thunder. The rain beat upon the roof of the lodge, trickling through the leaky spots.

But it was snug and dry in one corner, where Jenny crouched upon the couch of fragrant pine boughs, with both eyes shut tight and her fingers in her ears. Presently she began to shiver, and her teeth chattered under a nervous chill. Royal removed his coat and wrapped it around her shoulders. Not a word was spoken. During a momentary lull Jenny saw Royal's lips move. Having opened her eyes she decided to unstop her ears. When she did so she was met with a blinding flash and a terrific peal of thunder. She sank back limp upon the pine couch.

Instantly Royal was by her side, half kneeling. He lifted her head upon his knee, and swept aside the tangled tresses from her forehead. Then he burned a kiss upon her lips. Jenny thought the kiss would never, never end. She also thought: "If we're going to be struck by lightning, I hope it will be now." But they were not struck down. In fact, the worst was over.

Royal said so, at any rate, adding: "It was a terrible experience for you, my dear."

"I was awfully afraid of the thunder," chirped Jenny.

Royal smiled. "Thunder never harmed anybody." So saying, he tucked his coat more compactly about Jenny's shoulders. Jenny caught his hand and kissed it. After that he was very still. She closed her eyes. When she opened them Royal was standing by the door.

Caught in the fugitive luminous moment,—the flashes of lightning were growing more fitful, the thunder more distant—Royal resembled a statue of bronze. Yet within him there burned a strong sense of life, a sense of softness and savageness. His restlessness frightened him. On one point he felt happily assured. No matter how vague his future, he could depart now, leaving Jenny still in the environment of dreams. The vision of her saintly face would give him the strength of ten men, in battling with the world and overcoming

the obstacles that stood in the path of their happiness.

The rain pattered gently upon the roof, and then ceased entirely. The clouds parted, and the moon showed its face. A night bird, driven from its retreat, called pitifully for its mate. After a while the katy-dids and the katy-didn'ts began their nightly argument.

Their departure from the lodge was marked with silence. But once in the open, out of the confines of four walls, with the golden moonlight under their feet, they tasted of the joy of their achievement. They had passed through the furnace; they had come forth as gold. So sanctified was their love that it seemed to wrap them about, like a subtle garment, like the smoke of incense. Unfulfillment had enriched their world. They were still kingly children, wandering hand in hand, in quest of happiness.

They paused at the edge of the duck pond. The moment of parting had come. Their future wore rosy robes.

"This is our great secret," admonished Royal. "You will say nothing to anyone, nor permit yourself to be questioned."

"Our love is like a shrine," said Jenny, "hidden in the forest, where pilgrims pause to pray. Every day, every hour, I shall kneel before that shrine, until you return to me for keeps."

In Royal's eyes, Jenny seemed to have changed

from a girl into a woman, like the magic of flowers that bud and blossom in a night.

“Remember, when the leaves begin to fall,” said Royal at last. “And never lose faith in me, no matter what happens. . . .”

Then Jenny repeated the lines: “. . . ‘and there comes a bird once in a thousand years, that rubs its beak against the mountain; and when the whole mountain shall be rubbed away, then shall I lose my faith in you. . . .’”

They parted.

At ten o'clock Royal boarded the *Golden Fleece*. He was greatly relieved to find that the family, even the servants, had turned in for the night. When he passed Captain Xydias on the deck, the captain bowed and touched his cap.

Royal slept soundly, after the performance of his duty to all that was genuine and pure in his soul. When he awoke, he felt the vibration of the engine. Peering through the porthole, he glimpsed the fast disappearing shore line, dimmed by the morning mist.

Somehow he was conscious of an ominous silence.

CHAPTER IX

ALL through the morning the shuttle flew in Jenny's hands like a gaily plumaged bird in flight, as she crooned over her great secret. Gone was her wonderful prince, who was to shape fate out of circumstance.

But before the day was over, the shadow of the tragic forces fell across her path like a great image of terrible destiny. In her plain gingham frock, Jenny faced Sophia, who stood in the old-fashioned living room in her extravagant foppery of dress.

"I dare say Royal has told you a lot about his fashionable mamma," said Sophia, after refusing Jenny's invitation to be seated. All the time she was making a critical survey of Jenny through her jewelled lorgnette.

Jenny made no reply. She stood in dumb amazement and alarm. What was Royal's mother doing in Tranquility when she should be well on her way to Newport? . . . Royal's plans had gone amiss. . . . Something, the worst ever, had happened.

"Now let's get to the point," said Sophia bluntly. "When and where did you marry my son?"

No reply. Sophia grew very red in the face. "I'll force you to tell me," she blurted.

Just then Nancy hobbled into the parlor. She looked at Jenny and then at Mrs. Shuttles with dull, inquiring eyes. Sophia stepped forward and introduced herself. Then she said: "It grieves me terribly to tell you, madame, that this young person has been carrying on something awful with my son." Then she added: "You are very old. Please sit down, Mrs. . . . Tweedle."

"Beedle . . . Beedle," corrected Nancy.

"Well, then, Mrs. Beedle," Sophia qualified, "I dare say you have met my son, Mr. Renshaw."

"Yes, indeed, so; and a nice lad he is, too." Having spoken, Nancy turned to Jenny. "Is all this true, Jenny?" she asked. There was no tone of reproach in her voice. For the first time in her life, Jenny felt like crying out her confession on her Granny's shoulder. But she held her peace, a cold peace. Her beauty was cold, like a landscape from which the sunlight has faded. Nancy approached Sophia. "Have you any proof of the child's wrong doing?" she inquired. Then started for a chair.

What could Sophia say? She had no proof. She had left everything in Aaron's hands. He

had left her at the hotel and gone off in quest of positive proof. She expected him to appear at any moment. To fill in the gap she began to talk about commonplace people. She realized her lack of tact before it was too late. Nancy flared up immediately. Wheeling around with flashing eyes, Nancy exclaimed: "I would have you know that we are not commonplace. You are addressing a Cromwell, madam. Jenny is a Beedle, the Mayflower Beedles, if you please. I'll wager that you, with all your fuss and feathers, have no such distinguished ancestors as ours." She punctuated her remarks with a flourish of her cane in the direction of the portraits upon the wall.

Sophia came closer to Jenny. "My advice is, tell the truth."

Jenny was gazing through the little window over the fireplace, to a piece of blue sky. They were fixed, dilating eyes.

Nancy sank down on a ladder-back chair. "It's too bad, madam," she said in a piping voice, "that your son is not here to speak for himself."

"My son sailed for Europe this morning on board the *Golden Fleece*," said Sophia calmly. "We had all planned to sail on a long cruise, but at the last moment my husband thought best to lease our yacht to the Duke d'Avista, who lives in Rome. Royal was delighted to go. He expects to spend the entire winter abroad. The poor fellow has made a terrible mess of things."

Jenny hurried to the side of Nancy. "Don't you believe a word of it, Granny," she cried. "Royal loves me . . . loves me. He wouldn't do anything so cruel." Words hurled from a heart set on fire by wrongs and despair.

"What can I do, child?" asked Nancy, bewildered. "What can I say? I'm completely in the dark."

"Well, you won't be kept very long in the dark," Sophia supplemented, at the same time taking it upon herself to open the front door.

In walked Reverend Boggs, sallow and serious, followed by Aaron, very red and very hot under the collar. "It's true," Aaron said to Sophia in a half whisper. "They were married yesterday afternoon at Middle Village."

The little group closed in around Jenny. She shrank from the critical glances. Everybody seemed to be all eyes, wicked, searching eyes. With a slight gesture of repugnance she half turned her back upon them. She stood utterly, agonizingly, alone.

"My Jenny married?" Nancy repeated the words in a thin, tremulous voice. "Is it true, my child?"

But Jenny kept her silence, keeping her eyes fixed upon the rag rug at her feet, a rug of her making, figured with red tulips.

"Of course an annulment of the marriage will be sought at once by Mr. and Mrs. Shuttles,"

spoke the rector. "They are both under age—merely children."

"If this ever gets into the newspapers, we shall be ruined socially forever," put in Sophia.

"Hold your tongue, madam," commanded Nancy sternly. "Have you no respect for the cloth?"

"Everything rests with Jenny," the rector purred, glancing at the lone figure in the middle of the room. "If she will answer one question truthfully, it will be to her everlasting credit."

All eyes were now turned on Jenny, stripped of her princess robes, the poorest girl in the kingdom. What a tribunal to face. She had loved. For this she was being robbed of hope . . . of life itself. She felt terribly weak and defenceless. There was not the smallest chance to cling to.

Reverend Boggs, laying his hand gently upon her shoulder, leaned over, for he was much taller than Jenny, and put the question in a low voice. A blush mantled Jenny's cheeks—the livery of virtue, it has been called. Her eyes shone as with a celestial light as she mumbled her reply.

"She is still a child," announced the rector. Then he took from Jenny the marriage certificate which she had suddenly produced, as if by magic, from some secret place. As it left her hand Jenny felt as though her heart had been pulled out by the roots. She choked a sob.

After holding a whispered consultation with Aaron and Sophia, the rector turned to Nancy and said, very solemnly: "I am happy to say that Jenny's conduct in this very trying matter has won the admiration and respect of Mr. and Mrs. Shuttles, and it is their wish to make some sort of a settlement upon her."

Jenny rushed to her Granny's side. "No, no, Granny," she cried. "I won't accept it. I won't be bought."

His reverence bit his lip. "I am dealing with your Granny," he said sharply to Jenny. "Please do not interfere."

"No stigma shall rest upon you or yours, rest assured of that." As Aaron spoke to Nancy he made a low bow.

Nancy brandished her cane. "Begone, the lot of you!" she exclaimed, "and trouble us no more. I'll endure your insolence no longer. Have you no pity for the child?"

"Please don't make a scene," ventured Sophia.

"Hush thy screech, you meddlesome raven," Nancy almost shouted.

"Tut-tut," said the rector, putting his finger to his lips.

"I'll not tut-tut," piped Nancy, all in a tremble.

"Perhaps we had better go," suggested Reverend Boggs.

Aaron bowed politely to Nancy, who waved him off with her cane, then followed the rector through

the door. Sophia lingered a moment. She was trying to think of something cutting to say to the old woman who had defied her. When she turned to go, Jenny stood between her and the door.

"Why have you stolen my happiness from me?" asked Jenny in a plaintive voice. "Our love was so beautiful."

"Am I to understand that you threaten me?" retorted Sophia.

"What chance have I against you . . . against riches?" Jenny persisted.

Then Nancy spoke up. "The marriage of these children is sacred before God, and you with all your riches will never be able to tear them apart." She spoke as a prophetess.

The door slammed. Sophia had gone. Jenny tumbled forward, sank on her knees, and rocked to and fro.

The afternoon waned. Nancy lit the candles and put the kettle on to boil. The glory of the sunset paled; the autumnal moon rose and sent its melancholy light through the window, flooding the spot where Jenny sat huddled in despair.

There was no remorse in Aaron's reckoning. He had outwitted his stepson by calling off the cruise, and accepting an offer from the New York bankers of the Count d'Avista for a six-months' lease of the *Golden Fleece*. It had cost him a tidy bit to run down the marriage, but Royal was too big an asset, socially and financially, to be dis-

posed of lightly. Prolonged absence, even if forced, would cure the youth of his mad infatuation. He was still master of his stepson's future.

And all the while, the machinery set in motion by the tragic forces was grinding away. Money oiled the wheels of justice, and influenced the judgment of the law and the church.

Jenny learned of the final decree, annulling the marriage, from Reverend Boggs, late in October. Not a whisper had crept out in the meantime, for money is a great silencer. Nancy was growing more feeble every day. Tranquility Towers was closed for the winter. Gene had promised faithfully to write, but the letter that Jenny longed for never came. Aaron and Sophia had returned to New York, to nest in their new house, and soar, having crushed all obstacles in their path. But there is a plant called camomile, and the more it is trodden upon, the faster it grows. The little wren also often mounts as high as the eagle, by riding on its back.

Early in November, Nancy died—passed away in her sleep. It rained on the day of the funeral, a cold, drizzling rain. Jenny wept with desolate anguish beside the grave, under the old green sunshade that Gene had left behind, while Amanda Zackman, her godmother, comforted her as best she could. Three days later Nancy's will was read. The cottage and the land, about six acres, went to the church. Of course Jenny got some-

thing, for Nancy, in an erratic mood, had willed her the ancestral portraits—"so that she might cherish and uphold the righteous pride and tradition of the Cromwells and Beedles," also the geese, and then, strange enough, the end of the rainbow. But Jenny did not seem to mind.

Out of the tragedy of her happiness had come a swift, illuminating flash, revealing something within herself, so secure that all the tragic forces of the world could not drag it from her. Like the bird that nests in the headgear of some cathedral saint, she found herself above the calamities of life. She had never thought of music in that way before. Her fiddle, her art, alone remained as something vital, unassailable.

There was something else that came to Jenny this night of solitude. The seeds which Anne Silverman had sown seemed to spring suddenly into life.

Rummaging in her old cedar chest, she found Anne's card. In the dim candle-light, she read:

MISS ANNE SILVERMAN
22 Essex Street, New York City

New hopes, strange sensations, shaped her designs.

CHAPTER X

A city of dreams and promise beckoned to Jenny; a city, which, like a great and powerful magnet, possesses an irresistible attraction for countless human units. She sat with her face glued to the coach window as the train roared towards New York. Her savings were ample to keep her going for several weeks. Her godmother had promised to look after the family portraits and the geese while she tramped after the end of the rainbow. The lure of the unknown, of adventure, thrilled her strangely, as if, having been born by the roadside, she had inherited a strain of the happy freedom of the kingdom of the highway.

If she had been a bird she might have beaten her brains out against the city's walls, in the blinding brilliancy of lights and tumult that met her when she emerged, late in the afternoon, from the Grand Central station. She finally reached the Goldberg Flats, in Essex Street, although the immensity of things, the teeming life, frightened her. Everywhere, life at its utmost.

Tremulously she scanned the names on the brass letter boxes in the dimly lit vestibule—Levine, Rosenblum, Frankenstein, Jacobs, but no Silverman. Her heart sank with a thump. Then she espied another row of letter boxes, partly concealed by the door. More Levines, Rosenblums, Frankensteins, and finally—Silverman. She climbed the dark stairway to the third floor, front. She knocked. Anne opened the door.

There was a note of sincerity in Anne's welcome, and she set about to make Jenny feel at home. "You're just in time for supper," she declared, as Jenny removed her hat and coat. "I just had a sandwich, and was rushing off to a meeting of the shirtwaist operators—they're on a strike now, but they'll just have to get along without me."

"Now please don't let me interfere with your work, your duties," said Jenny; adding, in a tone of relief: "Oh, I'm so glad you haven't moved. I took chances in finding you, but . . . I was desperate."

Anne had already surmised that something volcanic had happened to send Jenny to New York, and felt sure that some explanation would be forthcoming sooner or later; so she busied herself fixing an extra place at the table. That accomplished, she called out: "Mamma! Papa!" This brought Mr. and Mrs. Silverman from the front room.

After a formal introduction, and a cordial reception of Jenny on the part of Anne's parents, neither of whom spoke English, supper was served. It consisted of a stew,—goulash, rye bread, pickles, apple kucken and coffee. Jenny ate ravenously of the strange food. Her hunger appeased, her imagination was kindled. She was actually in the tents of Israel. Beside her sat Isaac, Rebecca and Rachel. She thought of the flight of the Israelites out of Egypt; the crossing of the Red Sea, the building of the tabernacle, and Moses on Mt. Sinai. She was breaking bread with the descendants perhaps of those who had lived in Old Testament days.

"You mustn't think for a moment that I've come to sponge on you," said Jenny, at the close of the meal, when she and Anne were alone. "I expect to pay for my supper, and also for my room, if you can accommodate me for the night."

"Oh, nonsense," asserted Anne.

"I intend to make my own living now," Jenny went on, "and I want to do what's right."

"We have a spare bedroom to let," said Anne in a voice of affected indifference, "and it just happens to be vacant. We only ask three dollars and a half per week, which includes breakfast and supper. Izzy—that's my brother, and I, eat out as a rule during the day." She was gathering up the crumbs on the table oilcloth with a knife. "What sort of work do you mean to take up?"

"Oh, I shall be glad to do anything until I get a start," replied Jenny hopefully. "I do so want to make something out of myself. Sometimes I dream that the whole world is waiting eagerly to hear the message I shall bring, the message of my violin."

"You've got the right stuff in you, that's certain," Anne said, as she handed a tray of dishes to her mother, who took them into the kitchen, in the rear, to wash and wipe them. "I admire a girl that will take chances," continued Anne. "It was very plucky of you to come to this big town alone, and look me up."

"A great deal happened since I saw you last," said Jenny sadly.

"I guessed as much."

"Perhaps you've noticed that I'm wearing black. It's for my Granny. She's dead."

"You poor child."

"I . . . I haven't any home now." As she spoke, Jenny seemed to crumple up in her chair, and for a moment she was overwhelmed by her grief. She dried her tears with her pocket handkerchief.

"Nothing dries so quickly as tears," said Anne. "Once you enter the great struggle of life, you won't find time for them. The only time I ever feel like weeping is when I see girls like myself fighting for a mere existence, in order to buy luxuries for the rich."

"My dream world has tumbled to pieces," Jenny confessed.

"Am I to assume that your dream prince did come after all?" asked Anne. "You remember, the one you were telling me about. The prince with the golden boots."

This was too much for Jenny. Anne's words were like the probing of an old wound. Again her tear ducts were tapped.

"I suppose he turned out to be one of those tinpot princes." Anne was taking a good deal for granted.

Jenny flared up immediately. "My prince was true blue," she declared, drying her eyes. "The tragic forces tore us apart." Then, before realizing what she was saying, in the heat of the moment, she had conveyed to Anne much that had transpired during the summer, without mentioning any names, of course. But she told enough to convince Anne that the young man, the tinpot prince, belonged to the hated class, the rich.

"Of course you're going to seek redress at law?" said Anne with a mild voice.

"Oh, nothing like that."

"But you must fight back at these people," said Anne, unyielding. "For every pang you must demand its equivalent in dollars and cents."

"Oh, never, never, would I do that," returned Jenny.

"Insistence upon the rights of the individual,

your rights, are quite necessary in view of the gross injustice from which you have suffered at the hands of the rich." Anne spoke in a determined voice. "Why did you let them trample on you like this? Had you no friends to advise you? They have robbed you of your happiness . . . everything. Is not the mother ferocious who guards her young? Is not your love as sacred? . . ."

Jenny was glad to seek the privacy of her little eight-by-ten bedroom. It was a five-room flat, rented furnished. Mr. and Mrs. Silverman slept in the parlor, in a folding bed that masqueraded as a wardrobe during the day. Izzy occupied a lounge in the dining room. Anne's room adjoined Jenny's.

"I'll ask some of the girls to-morrow if they know of any place where you might land a job." Anne had dropped in to say good-night. "Stitchers are always in demand, but the work is irregular and the pay small. You might take up the artificial flower business. The work is light and steady, and it will keep the wolf from the door."

After Anne's departure, Jenny bolted the door. Then for the first time she experienced the sense of being crowded. It affected her breathing to such an extent that she leaned out of the one window. The night air revived her. Above her she glimpsed a patch of sky. Far beyond, like a huge

black cobweb, she espied a great suspension bridge, which seemed to arch the housetops. All about her a magical city of wonder, set in a luminous mist, its thunder of tumult falling faintly from afar.

She crept into a cold, hard bed, with her fortune, reduced to seven dollars, concealed in a hole in the straw mattress. The challenging influences of the day now gave way to thoughts of Royal. She pictured his return, for her faith in him was absolute, searching for her in vain amid the wintry desolation of Heavenly Hill.

* * * * *

The week was half spent and Jenny had not found employment. The polyglot humanity of the lower East Side, the eternal struggle for existence, frightened her into covert. Reduced to the common domestic level of the Silverman household, she found much to jolt and jar her finely strung sensibilities. Just how Anne could manage to dress so well on twelve dollars a week was beyond her comprehension. Anne was a muslin underwear operator by trade, although she was now centralizing her efforts on behalf of the striking shirtwaist workers, who looked upon her as a leader in their fight for shorter hours and higher wages. So Jenny put the question to Anne about her clothes.

"Every girl who earns her own living has a right to spend her money as she sees fit," was

Anne's reply. "It is very important for the working girl to be neat and well dressed. If we are shabby, we don't get work."

Anne and Jenny were on their way to Clinton Hall, where a mass meeting of the girl strikers was in progress. In Grand Street Anne stopped at a clothing shark's, where an alluring sign read: "A Dollar a Week and Let Us Clothe You." Fifteen minutes later Anne emerged from the shop with a new set of gray fox furs.

"A lot of us girls," Anne explained as they continued on their way to the hall, "buy our clothes on the installment plan. Hardly any of us own the clothes on our backs. You'll see some of the girls at the meeting this afternoon almost in rags. That means that the collector shark has stripped them of practically all of the decent clothes they possess, because they haven't the means to pay. It costs money, you know, to dress like a lady, to please the employer. Is there any wonder that I rebel against the injustice of modern life and the unequal distribution of wealth?"

The assembly room at Clinton Hall was dark, and the air fetid and close. Anne's appearance on the platform was the signal for an outburst of applause. The hall was packed with girls. Jenny sat in the front row, and as Anne proceeded, Jenny could not help feeling that her friend was posing for effect, in her new fox furs. The applause was deafening now. Anne raised her hand

to invoke silence; the response was electric.

Said Anne: "My friends in a great cause, please save your energy. Don't waste it on me. We have a fight to wage, and you need all of your strength to win. We shall win, even if Ikey Levison holds out against us with all the cops of New York at his command."

This brought forth more applause. After the commotion had subsided, Anne continued: "We must get rid of the scabs, and make it impossible for a slave-driver like Levison to keep his shop open at starvation wages. As you all know, Ikey (hisses) has refused to recognize the Shirtwaist Workers' Union. Now is the time to act. Some of us may have to go to jail, but who among us would ever stop to think of the consequences when there is so much at stake? I take it that none of you girls are over eighteen. You are healthy, and you want to be happy, don't you? (Applause.) And have nice clothes? (Prolonged applause.) Then we must stick together and fight to the last ditch, for, remember, in union there is strength."

At Anne's suggestion a collection was then taken to carry on the strike propaganda. In the midst of it a girl about seventeen, her hair dishevelled, her garments torn, ran down the center aisle to the platform. Instantly the hall was in an uproar. Jenny heard someone close by exclaim: "It's Rosie Berkowitz, the picket."

Rosie mounted the platform, and told her story in a broken, breathless voice.

"As you all know," said Rosie, "I was doing picket duty at Ikey Levison's shop. Well . . . he set the cops on me."

"Shame!" echoed through the hall.

"I was only doing my duty, mind you," continued Rosie, raising her voice, "and I had a perfect right to speak to Lizzie Rosenbaum."

"The scab!" came from every quarter.

"That's right," cried Rosie. "She's a dirty scab, and I threw it in her face, and . . . she spit on me."

"Then what?" asked Anne, in a calm but loud tone.

"What did I do?" returned Rosie. Then, proudly: "I spit in *her* face."

"Good for you, Rosie." The assembly unanimously agreed on this.

"Then Ikey," Rosie continued, "who'd seen the whole business from his office window, set the cops on me. But I kicked and scratched, and I got away. So here I am. Now what are you going to do?"

"Down with Ikey Levison! Down with the scabs!" The cry was taken up, and a general exodus to the street ensued. The mob spirit grew as a storm grows out of a handful of clouds, and gathered force as the girls, a hundred strong, swept onward to Ikey Levison's shop, two blocks

away. The frenzied strikers were picking up anything that came in their way,—tin cans, bricks, cobble-stones, and bits of wood. At the head of the mob marched Anne, like a modern Jeanne d'Arc, brandishing the leg of a chair.

Jenny never knew where the brick came from that she held in her hand. One of the girls must have passed it to her in the growing turbulence. It was there, at any rate; and in her heart there came a wild desire to throw it at somebody or something. She was one of the mob now; she could not pause to reason. The girls, like herself, were victims of circumstances over which they had no control. They had been downtrodden, trampled upon; so had she. But she was armed now and ready to fight. She experienced a strange sense of confidence in herself and security in the spirit of the mob.

By this time the thin line of police had been broken through. Cries of "Scab! Scab!" were heard above the sound of crashing glass. Jenny caught sight of Anne engaged in a very unlady-like tussle with a big policeman. She saw her wield the leg of the chair with telling effect, making an awful dent in the policeman's headgear. In fact, she became so fascinated at the sight of Anne's encounter that she forgot to hurl her brick through Ikey's office window.

"Drop that brick."

Jenny had not noticed the approach of a police-

man from the rear. She dropped the brick. Her heart was in her throat. She looked up into two twinkling Irish eyes. Evidently the policeman was not taking her seriously. She tossed her head in defiance. "Well, what do you want?" It was the only thing she could think to say. The policeman held her by both arms, as in a vise.

"What do I want, Miss? Sure, and I'd be satisfied with a kiss."

By a sudden twist of her arm, Jenny succeeded in freeing one hand, and she administered a stinging rebuke by slapping the policeman's face. Finding herself free from his grasp, she turned and ran. The strikers, outnumbered by the police, were fleeing in all directions. Jenny never stopped until she reached Essex Street. She hid behind the hall door at No. 22 until Anne showed up. Anne was apparently unruffled by her experience; her new fox furs were unharmed. She compared notes with Jenny, and ended up by giving Jenny an impulsive embrace.

"You did beautifully," said Anne in a purring voice. "I'm proud of you. It shows that after all you've got some spunk in you." She paused to put her hat on straight. "Wasn't it a splendid encounter? Behold, the stains of combat." She held up the leg of the chair which she had concealed in the folds of her petticoat.

"Is it blood?" gasped Jenny.

"Only red paint, my dear," replied Anne, "but

a symbol of the blood of combat. I certainly gave that cop a whack on his head he'll remember to his dying day. The idea of setting the hounds of the law upon us weak, defenceless girls. Did you throw anything, my dear?"

"I meant to throw a brick," confessed Jenny, "when a horrid policeman made me drop it."

"Then I suppose you apologized, and came home."

"I slapped his face, I did . . . good and hard."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Anne.

"I did so because he wanted to kiss me." Jenny bowed her head in humiliation.

The suggestion of a kiss was so remote from Anne's present state of mind that she stood aghast for a moment. Then she said: "That's the whole trouble in a nutshell. The male will never take the female seriously. We cannot submerge our sex no matter how engrossed we may become in the serious problems of life."

Jenny's eyes moistened. The reaction was setting in. "I hope you didn't hurt the poor policeman," she said.

CHAPTER XI

THE next morning Jenny elected to remain indoors. Anne hurried off early to the Essex Market Police Court, where three of the strikers, caught in the mesh of the law, were to be arraigned on a charge of disorderly conduct. Jenny felt worn out. The struggle of the masses, combat, unfairness, passion, had forced upon her the knowledge of the severe conditions and the lawlessness of life.

Before the day was over, a near tragedy took place in the adjoining tenement house, when an Italian youth, in a fit of jealous rage, shot and seriously wounded his sweetheart. Jenny viewed the excitement in the street from the front window, and after the crowd had dispersed, she crept downstairs, to peep into the hallway where the little drama of love had been enacted.

Sylvanus Hopp had also been attracted to the spot, but it was a matter of business with Sylvanus, who was a district reporter for the *Evening Star*. He was a man about forty, tall and thin,

with an abundance of black hair, touched with gray over his temples. His features were regular, almost delicate, and when he spoke to Jenny, his voice sounded very soft and pleasing. He was looking for the Gardellas, he said.

"I can only give you second hand information," returned Jenny, who was struck with the timidity of the stranger. "Marie Gardella has been taken to the hospital, and no doubt her mother is with her."

"My mission was to find Maria," said Sylvanus, backing out of the door. "I'm a reporter."

"I was sure you were no relation of theirs," Jenny ventured, following Sylvanus to the door. There was something whimsical about the stranger that appealed to her. As they stood in the doorway she saw the laughing youth in his eyes.

Sylvanus, on the other hand, saw that the slender girl, with her big wistful eyes, was decidedly out of place on the lower East Side, although she seemed to be of foreign extraction, with her dark complexion and raven black hair. Her color, her sanguineness and the cut of her dress, showed that she was country-bred. Right away, he thought of her as a little bird that had fluttered into the dark byways of the city.

"I hope you don't think me a bad, bold man for speaking to you," said Sylvanus, with a twinkle in his grayish eyes. "People who report the do-

ings of others are usually presumptuous. I'm the exception perhaps. But a poor man must go where opportunity points the way."

"I'm not frightened of you at all," asserted Jenny, smiling. "It seems as if you are timorous of me."

"Even as a boy I was scared to death of anything in petticoats," Sylvanus admitted. "But I'm not dreadfully scared of you. I'm sure you won't harm me."

Jenny giggled. "How funny," she said. "You're the first man I ever met who was afraid of girls."

"I regard girls as an unnecessary evil," Sylvanus said. "Never in my life have I had what might be termed a precocious predilection for feminine society. Be that as it may, I take great pleasure in introducing myself. My name is Sylvanus Hopp."

Jenny affected a grand bow. "Sylvan means woody. Woods and hoppy toads. I love them both." So saying she introduced herself. Adding: "I shall call you Mr. Hippety-hop."

Sylvanus laughed outright. "I knew you were an unusual person despite your sex," he said.

The meeting was such an original enterprise that Jenny made no attempt to be other than herself. "I live next door, three flights up, with the Silvermans."

"Not Anne Silverman?"

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"Well, rather," replied Sylvanus. "I've written up her escapades for the newspapers dozens of times. A most original girl, and a born leader. She's keen now on radicalism and the uplift of the won't-work class. She reminds me of a female Atlas, with the burden of the world on her shoulders. Some day she will get into the proper environment. She would make a splendid suffragette."

Jenny was curious to learn something more about reporting. She found Sylvanus to be a perfect well of information. Already he had told her more about the city than she ever hoped to know.

"The biggest stories are never published," said Sylvanus, pocketing his newspaper, on which he made all his notes, never having any copy paper handy; and generally without a pencil, which he often had to borrow. He continued: "The newspapers only skim the surface of life. If they told everything, the news would become commercialized tragedies, and the world would go mad."

"Is all the world so terribly wrong?" pursued Jenny.

"If it wasn't all wrong, my child," asserted Sylvanus, with a broad grin, "I should be out of a job. It is from the tattered tragedies of the city that I earn my thirty dollars per week. It is out

of human wretchedness and suffering that I am gathering material for the great play I hope to write some day."

They parted, to meet again in an entirely different environment. The next day Jenny found employment as a muslin underwear operator. Her savings had been reduced to an alarming minimum. Life had become a hideous reality. The factory wherein she toiled was in the shadow of a great bridge.

Abram Zollikoffer's muslin underwear factory took up the entire top floor of a ramshackle four-story building, which stood so close to the bridge approach that it seemed to vibrate with the roar of the traction and vehicular traffic. A top story is usually entitled to some air and sunshine. Not so at Zollikoffer's shop. The sun never shone there, owing to the peculiar location of the building. The burning daylight came from the dozens of gas-jets, which ate up the oxygen, already poisoned by the exhalation from a hundred lungs. Then Zollikoffer made it a rule to keep the windows closed and screened on the side next to the bridge, a precaution against the girls flirting with the foot passengers. To loiter at these windows meant instant dismissal. Joe Levitch, the foreman, saw to that. Joe drove the girls, those who spurned his gross familiarities, like slaves. Thus far he had treated Jenny with indifference, for which she was duly thankful. But she dreaded her

turn; she felt in her bones that it was bound to come some day.

According to Mrs. Browning, the secret of life is in full occupation. After the day's toil, the old fiddle seemed to keep the embers of love and imagination in Jenny's heart aglow. She would drop into the free library just around the corner now and then, as there was nothing she found so cheap as reading. She kept in touch with Royal's world through the medium of newspapers, where she learned that Jolanda had been presented to society, and was one of the most popular debutantes of the season. She waded through long lists of guests, but found no mention of Royal.

But her evening diversions were halted when she joined the artificial flower class at the night school. Her instructor was Samuel Quiggles, a very aristocratic old man who took quite a fancy to her. Samuel was an Englishman by birth, and had retired from the second-hand bookstore business some years back. He was about seventy now, and lived in solitary style in an old-fashioned house in Greenwich Village. His fad was horticulture. Recently he had taken up the philanthropic idea of instilling the love of flowers into the lives of the unfortunate through the practical side of artificial flower making. This will account for his presence as a teacher of the gentle trade at the night school in a congested tenement district.

Jenny liked him immensely, although she had been rather awed at first by this very precise gentleman of the old school, with his excessive spirit of renewed youth. He did not talk social science like Anne, nor did he have his fingers upon the pulse of the world like Sylvanus Hopp. He lived in the past, and his soul seemed to be linked with ancient things. He talked of kings and queens, of dukes and duchesses, of moated castles and feudal strongholds, as though he had lived amongst them all his life. Long an ardent student of romantic history, his everyday life, in his second childhood, was like a literary production of the imagination. In fact, Samuel could invent the most wonderful tales, and he believed his own inventions. One of his favorite fallacies was that he was the Duke of Crow.

Jenny soon found that her enlarging horizon of life was involving deeper problems. Joe Levitch, the foreman at Zollikoffer's factory, was daily placing himself more at intimate ease in her presence. He had already been the means of bettering the quality of her work and increasing her wages. Thus her state of perplexity was made more keen by the sense of obligation. She experienced days of nervous dread; at night she would cry out in her sleep, at the vision of Joe's wicked eyes and long, hairy hands.

And yet each day seemed to bring forth fresh novelties, new sensations. With her heritage of

toil and sex came the bitter with the sweet. Sweet were the moments in the happy companionship of Mr. Quiggles. Samuel sustained her spirits with stories of lore and fancy—mostly fancy. His great delight was to turn a beggar maid into a princess at the close of each story.

“A princess born to her estate,” he would say, “may be vain, self-indulgent, and weak, but the beggar maid has love, purity, meekness and self-renunciation. All these are wealth and power.”

Then came the Feast of the Passover, when all that was unclean was carted away. Jenny watched the rumbling carts bear away load after load of rubbish from Essex Street—broken crockery, rusty bedsprings, and soiled and torn mattresses. The shank bone of a lamb, emblematic of the ancient sacrifice, and goblets of vinegar, bitter reminders of the yoke of bondage, appeared upon the Silverman table. Through it all, Jenny prayed that the angel of deliverance would come to her door.

About this time, Samuel dropped out of sight. Nobody seemed to know just what had become of him. Evidently he had had a row with the august board, who paid him a pittance for his services. Jenny was too much occupied with her own affairs to look him up. Affairs had reached a crisis at Zollikoffer's shop. Anne had started on the war path once again. This time it was a strike of the muslin underwear operators, which directly af-

fecting Zollikoffer's shop. There was a walk-out. Thus it came about that Joe Levitch struck back at Anne through Jenny. But Jenny was not wholly unprepared, and before all the girls—just before the walk-out, she slapped his face. Her dismissal followed forthwith. So she was out of employment. The next day she joined the ranks of the strikers as they marched, four abreast, from Grand Street to Union Square.

By the time the procession reached Washington Square, it grew upon Jenny that she did not belong to the mob. Here she was, following a leader, who, with strange passions and prejudices, could wreck her bark of single purpose. To be at the mercy of her own petty likes and dislikes was bad enough; to be slaved by the changing mood of others was surely worse. The spirit of the occasion, it seemed to her now, had to do only with the salvation of the masses, not of the individual. For personal achievement she must rise above the disturbing and retarding forces of the submerged. The very atmosphere of the square, with its fantastic-shaped trees, silent fountain, and stately residences, gave purpose to her thoughts. The great white arch seemed to stand as a gateway to an altered thought-world; an entrance to a picture world, where people and things were not so negative and beggarly—a gateway to opportunity. So she stole unnoticed from the ranks of the strikers, and sat down on a bench in the park.

Life was suddenly revealed to Jenny as pregnant with possibilities. Here, all about her, was the aristocracy of art. Her place was in this picture world, away from the ugly and debased. Surely there was a little niche awaiting her in this pleasant environment. She had hoarded her savings, although she was not quite so rich as when she left Tranquility, but quite enough to keep her going for a fortnight at least. She thought it all out as she retraced her steps to Essex Street, following the route of the parade. It was a good long walk, and she was utterly tired out when she reached No. 22. She was also in a quandary as to just how to make the break without ruffling Anne's feelings. And while in this state of perplexity a letter came. She recognized her god-mother's scrawl at first glance.

At the close Jenny's eyes fell upon this wonderful bit of news: ". . . This morning I noticed the nice young man from The Towers wandering aimlessly around the cottage. At first I thought he was a book agent. He knocked at the front door, then at the back door, afterward peering into the windows. He acted very queer. Finally, he disappeared over the hill, in the direction of your nest in the trees. . . ."

Jenny's heart leapt with joy. Royal had returned. He had sought her first at the cottage, and then at the lodge on Heavenly Hill. He loved her. He was still faithful and true after his en-

forced absence abroad. The wicked machinations of the tragic forces had been to no avail. Her prayer had been answered; the angel of deliverance had knocked at her door. They would be reunited. Her night was spent—the dawn had come. She felt giddy; she was madly joyous.

And all this time she was dimly conscious that she was flying. Now she would fly this way, and now that way. The truth was, the happy intelligence contained in the letter had turned Jenny's head a bit. It had come upon her in the nature of a shock when she was least prepared for it. The day's exertions and excitement had overtaxed her strength, which was at a pretty low ebb at its best, owing to the crush and grind of the winter. She had rushed from the flat bareheaded, and was now hurrying westward through the throngs. She did not realize what she was doing, nor had she the remotest idea where she was bound. She kept saying to herself: "He loves me! He loves me!" And what seemed strange to her was that her own happiness appeared to be reflected in the fleeting faces about her as she hurried on and on.

By this time Jenny had outstripped her familiar environments. She had unconsciously entered the precincts of Greenwich Village, where the rows of small, red brick houses with dormer windows and chimney pots outnumber the tenement houses.

It was quite dark when she paused at last, in a moment of giddiness, supporting herself against

an iron railing, which acted as a guard in front of a quaint little shop, several steps below the street level. A sign over the shop door showed that it was a doll's hospital, and also that scroll saw novelties were for sale. In the window, illuminated by a row of gas-jets, were displayed cuckoo clocks, royal equipages, Swiss chalets, railway locomotives, and many odd figures and designs, fashioned by the scroll saw. The buzz of the saw came through the open transom over the door. It was this that attracted Jenny's attention. Leaning over, she espied the figure of an old man bending over the saw. Near by sat a cherub-faced old woman, with a frilled cap, mending a broken doll.

"Professor Jiggs! Gene! Is it really you?" cried Jenny as she burst unceremoniously into the shop.

Gene, with an exclamation of mingled surprise and welcome, rose from his work bench.

Then, as if something vital had snapped within her, like a worn fiddle string, torn by emotion, Jenny sank in a heap on the floor.

CHAPTER XII

THE interview between Royal and his mother and stepfather, held in the library of the big house in Fifth Avenue, the day after his return from Europe, was a stormy one.

At no stage of his dream tragedy had Royal fully realized what his marriage and even his absence abroad meant to his next of kin. The passion to climb seems to be born in some people, an atavistic instinct, no doubt, not only human but simian. The cessation of her social ambitions had played havoc with Sophia, and Aaron shared not a little of the days and nights of unrest, with the public clamoring, like the Russian revolutionists, at his heels. There was also the highly tensioned anxiety lest the report of Royal's unfortunate marriage and subsequent annulment should leak out. And now that he had come back, with obstinate defiance, and had sallied forth with the grim determination to make amends (or make matters worse, as his mother expressed it), the house of Shuttles trembled to its foundation stones. As a

parting fling, Royal had threatened to turn the limelight of publicity into the family cupboard, by having the whole affair published in the newspapers.

Altogether he was in a most unfortunate state of mind. It seemed as if he could never live down the haunting memories of the long days when he was held virtually a prisoner on board the *Golden Fleece*. It was late in December when he first learned the result of parental interference. His marriage annulled. The thought nearly drove him mad.

He might have struck out wildly then had not his spirits been crushed under the millstone of stern decree. At Naples, where he put ashore, a shattered semblance of himself, he found a generous sum of money awaiting him, to cover his expenses back home, but he refused to accept it. A few days later the Duke d'Avista took possession of the yacht, and sailed away, with Captain Xydias in command. Then Royal fell a victim to the ravages of fever, and was reduced to such a pitiful state that he was really forced to draw on his stepfather.

There had been something of grandeur in his dreams of a career; now they had been crushed. He seemed somewhat over-wearied, after the scene with his next of kin, but he had lost none of his strangely quiet energy when he fared forth in quest of Jenny, vowing never to set foot in his

people's house again. The next day he stood amid the wintry desolation of Heavenly Hill, his consciousness focused on a dead nest from which the bird had flown. In the darkened and deserted cottage, he saw naught but the faded splendor of dreams. Still, he lingered, treading the familiar paths with seemly reverence.

The day following he called on Senhor Riano, who listened to his tale with tears in his eyes, and then sent him into the Seventh Heaven by producing Jenny's town address. After partaking of sugared fruit, almonds dipped in sweetened paste, and washing it all down with sparkling orange juice, he beat a hasty retreat. But it was happy haste. By seven o'clock he was in New York.

Grim darkness had settled upon Essex Street when Royal stumbled into the hallway of the Goldberg Flats. He made a hurried canvass of the tenement, every nerve tingling with expectancy, but he was met on every side with a shake of the head and a shrug of the shoulders. Finally he found someone who knew the Silverman family. But they had moved. Where?

His quest had failed. The Silvermans, it seems, like many other tenement house dwellers, had silently folded their tents and crept away, leaving no tangible clue behind them. The embittering thought that Jenny had come to dwell in such a maelstrom of life, that she had been so circumstanced through his own involuntary actions, re-

duced Royal to a state of mental anguish which closed over all his rich fancies. She was utterly lost to him.

Yet for days he haunted the lower East Side, with renewed visions, which came just in time to counteract the fatal completion of his quest; he even made another hurried visit to Senhor Riano, thinking perhaps he had copied the address incorrectly. Then, one day, he found himself, forlorn and hopeless, on a bench in the little park enclosure at Bowling Green, at the foot of Broadway.

Feeding on cold things the animation grows cold. Around him was being enacted the drama of career; the spirit of finance, of commerce, was everywhere. The gigantic buildings, each a monument of ambition, of career, hemmed him in. Greatness and power seemed to stand astride over him like the Colossus of Rhodes. The very tramp of feet seemed to echo the stimulus of the time and place. Through the trees of Battery Park he could see the plying river craft; from the purple distance of the Jersey shore came the shriek of the big freight locomotives.

Thus it grew upon him that while the world was progressing, while men were making fortunes and carving their names in the halls of commercial fame, he was sitting alone . . . aimless, hopeless. Little by little his spirits began to revive under the subtle influence of environment. Jenny had

placed herself beyond his ken; he was beating his head against a stone wall so far as she was concerned. But the pathway to the big business of life still lay before him.

Why not step into the niche which his stepfather had hollowed out for him? Any further obstinacy, or act of retaliation, might hinder his business progress. He could not strike back until he had power, and the quickest and easiest way to power was to accept the offer which still held good. So he returned to the fold, with this consuming desire in his heart, some day to exact retribution for the wrongs that had been heaped upon him. And it is the silent forces born within man that are the most powerful.

Aaron welcomed Royal with the evident desire to play fair, while Sophia wept on his shoulder. Royal achieved the miracle of transition with wonderful self-complacency. All he said was this: "I'm ready to go to work." Nothing was said of the past; not a word.

Before dinner, Royal wandered through the great house. He saw it in the light of a magnificent mausoleum, built expressly for the burial of his youth and happiness. He could never look upon it as his home . . . home was the refuge from the storms of life. The rare tapestries seemed to be hiding the ugly shams of life, which operate against the mystic dreams of youth; the grinning dragons on the Chinese porcelains, in

his eyes, were only symbols of the diabolical cunning that had shattered his illusions and wrecked his dreams.

He moved from room to room, where the walls were hung in gold brocades and furnished with divans, chairs and tables of the Louis Seize period. The drawing-room set, he noticed, was after the one in the Palace of Fontainebleau, upholstered in Aubusson tapestry, with scenes from the fables of La Fontaine. The water splashed in an old Italian fountain in the staircase hall. On the walls of the art gallery hung the old masters; he admired a Corot, a Diaz, a Vibert, a Cazin, and a Gainsborough. His mother, he found, slumbered in a Louis XVI bed, under a canopy of soft laces and silk, while his Aunt Carrie had a Louis XV bed all to herself.

He thought of an entirely different house, a little house in the trees, hung with tapestries of innocence and love. He could hear the orchestra of birds, concealed in the gallery of trees; he could see the star-studded canopy of twilight. Poor little Jenny Wren! How she must have suffered. But he would find her some day. He was sure of that. And then . . .

Jolanda, in her mother's purple-shaded limousine, glimpsed Royal as he walked down Fifth Avenue on the following afternoon. The motor was standing in front of one of the novelty shops that dot the avenue.

"It seems awfully nice to see you again, after your sudden and surprising departure for Europe last Autumn," said Jolanda, after Royal had accepted her invitation to join her in the limousine for a chat. Then: "Mother is scouting for some artificial flowers, to be used at a charity affair during Mi-Câreme, in which I am to be an angel. I know I shall feel awfully strange with wings and things. One has to do such queer things for charity nowadays."

Royal spoke briefly of his trip, and how glad he was to get back. "After all," he remarked, gazing up the avenue, brilliant with sunshine, with its smart shops and fashionably gowned throngs, its ceaseless flow of genteel traffic, "this is God's acre."

"I don't think I've been off the avenue more than once or twice during the whole season," said Jolanda.

"Oh, then you've given up your ideas about settlement work?"

"The girls who go in for that sort of thing, I find, are such frumps," replied Jolanda. "Besides, why should we . . . we who have everything, bother our heads about those who have nothing? The poor are just as proud as the rich, and I think it horrid to intrude upon their privacy. Imagine strangers prying into your home and asking silly questions and offering cast-off clothing. 'How's your mamma since she sprained her ankle

dancing?' or—'Is your papa sober to-day?' Really, it's too ridiculous." She laughed.

Royal was plainly disappointed in Jolanda, but he took good care not to show it. She had undergone a decided change in her looks and manners, in her thoughts and aspirations, during his absence; a decided transformation had taken place, as of a chrysalis into a butterfly. She was giddy and frivolous; highstrung and nervous. He missed the fresh girlishness. There was a certain artificiality about her now; she was made up, and smelt of cigarettes. Perhaps she had been going at too rapid a pace; most debutantes do.

When Mrs. Van Mater returned to the motor, she saw everything to increase her anxiety. Since she had learned of Royal's return she had been beset with a feeling of fever and disquiet. During his absence she had allowed Jolanda every freedom within good taste, and had deftly encouraged the attentions paid to her daughter by Prince Paul, a military attaché of one of the European legations at Washington.

The perilous present was upon her, dark and haunting. The inner knowledge that Aaron Shuttles could rise at his will and imperil the pride and tradition of her house had become almost an obsession. Yet he stood for everything that was making life pleasant: the two-years' lease on the town house, the limousine, and every luxury that had been necessary for Jolanda's coming-out.

There had been something mysterious about Royal's trip abroad. During his absence Aaron and his wife had not exacted the slightest obligation from her. But she was quick to learn of his return, and the word had come through Sophia, over the telephone, concluding in a veiled threat. It was her duty now to live up to her agreement, and to stimulate Jolanda's regard for Royal, to force the match. . . .

She knew Jolanda to be fickle and capricious, always skimming the surface of things, sipping the froth of life. Since her debut, she had become socially incorrigible; that is, she mixed with impossible people, smoked innumerable cigarettes, and imbibed freely of champagne. While these traits were not wholly improper, it proved that Jolanda was flaccid and easily influenced.

She (Mrs. Van Mater) had known dozens of girls who had passed through the debutante stage without succumbing to the social taint that lurks in the first season of freedom, with its dinners, midnight suppers and late dances. As for correcting or rebuking her daughter, she was always putting it off to a future time. Just as now she felt there was no immediate need of concession to the Shuttles . . . things could hang fire all summer. Still, as matters stood now, she was not so dead set against the sacrifice of Jolanda's happiness. What she most desired was something with

which to combat the motives of the Shuttles, and still keep her own head above water. It puzzled her to learn that her daughter was not keen about marriage.

After welcoming Royal in a few formal words, Mrs. Van Mater expressed the wish to get home as soon as possible, as she felt a nasty headache coming on.

Jolanda grew peeved over not having tea as she had planned, at the Ritz, where she could smoke, and was moody and sullen all the way home. But, later, on the pretext of going out for a short walk in the park, she managed to reach a tea shop in the Fifties, which was not quite the proper place for unchaperoned girls. And it was at this tea shop, by means of a countersign familiar only to those in the know, that Rhoda, the head waitress, would most obligingly serve a "stick" in the tea.

Having given the countersign, Jolanda joined two habitués of the tea shop, with whom she had struck up an acquaintanceship on a previous visit. Both girls were debutantes, and really very nice, except that they came from Riverside Drive, and had not been taken up by society.

"I'm in love with this tea shop, aren't you? It's so informal." Jolanda punctuated her chatter with puffs at her monogrammed cigarette. "Polly Primrose put me on to it. Polly's one of the older girls. My, but the older girls have a rip-

ping time of it. Are you thirsty? I am . . . terribly."

She sat and smoked and talked of this and that . . . brilliant tittle tattle. After the second cup of tea there was no subject seemingly too deep for Jolanda. She delved into the cults and isms of the day irregardless.

"I'm simply wild over the cubists," she was saying. "All the girls are this season."

Science tells us that if certain flowers, the pure white primula and the white sweet William, are made intoxicated with alcohol, they will flush scarlet.

Jolanda's cheeks wore a rich crimson under the rouge when she finally left the tea shop and took a taxi home.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Jenny recovered consciousness, she found herself on a chintz-covered lounge, in the cosy living room which opened off from the Professor's doll's hospital and workshop. Gene was chafing her hand, while Clementina, his wife, busied herself making something hot on the glowing embers in the open grate. She felt no pain; she was just tired out. . . . Oh, so tired! She thought it so nice to have dear, kind people like Gene and Clementina making a fuss over her, so she lay quite still, with one eye half open, like the china cat on the mantelpiece. Surely it was a haven of homely peace and quiet into which she had fallen, like a wounded sparrow from the eaves.

"Poor little Jenny Wren," she heard Gene say.

"Maybe the angels up in Heaven, who play with our little Mimi, sent her to us," said Clementina, as she stirred the glass of hot lemonade.

Jenny was revived under the gentle ministrations of Gene and Clementina in less time really

than it would take a sparrow to fly from the eaves of the house at No. 72½ Grove Street, where they occupied the basement, to Washington Square park, in quest of a worm; while the miracle of youth restored the warmth to her body and the glow to her cheeks.

Sitting in a big armchair by the fireplace, Jenny related many of her experiences, and when she told of her Granny's death, she had a choking sensation in her throat, but she did not weep. The absence of tears worried Gene, for it showed that Jenny, since leaving Tranquility, had faced the realities of life; he hoped that none of the pretty illusions had been taken from her. On the other hand, Jenny was most curious to know the circumstances that had brought about the great change in the musician's life.

Gene showed her his hands . . . his fingers stiff and deformed. "Just look at them," he said in a pitiful voice. "All of the music has gone out of them." He buried his face in his hands, and groaned.

Jenny could have wept then, but her tears were held in check by what Clementina had to say.

"The poor man was two months in the hospital," said Clementina, wiping one moist eye with the corner of her white apron, "with inflammatory rheumatism. When he realized he could never play the fiddle again, he nearly went crazy. Didn't you, dearie?"

Gene conceded nothing; he only groaned. Clementina continued: "He was for throwing himself off the dock into the river. He acted like a mad man. Didn't you, dearie?" Then, before Gene could reply, she added: "But if he can't play the fiddle no more, he has me, for which he should be very much obliged."

"And so I am." So saying, Gene rose, and walked to where Clementina sat, by the center table, where she was knitting woollen socks by lamplight. Leaning over, he gave her a loving pat on the cheek. "Ain't that a nice face?" he asked, smiling across the room at Jenny. "Well, she's got a big heart on the inside, as big and warm as the kitchen stove. And she's got brains, too. Why, if Clementina hadn't started up this little business of mending broken dolls and making cuckoo clocks and things, we might have been in the poorhouse by now. Ain't that so, Tina?"

Clementina blushed like a schoolgirl, and pressed her warm cheek against Gene's misshapen hand. "You see, it was this way," she explained to Jenny. "When I was a young girl in Zeeland, I worked in a toy shop, and there I learned how to put dolls and cuckoo clocks together, and I never forgot it. It didn't take Gene long to get used to the scroll saw, as the work is all done by patterns. Now he makes beautiful things. He's a wonderful man. Ain't you, dearie?"

Just then the bird stuck its head out of the

clock, hanging over the mantelpiece, and with cheery notes announced the hour. Eight o'clock. Jenny gave a nervous start. "Oh, Professor!" she exclaimed: "My fiddle! My child! Something terrible might happen to it. The flat might burn up. Besides, Anne will be terribly wrought up over my strange disappearance." Weak as she was, Jenny would have rushed off forthwith to Essex Street if Gene had not gently restrained her.

"We want you to feel that this is your home," said Clementina, after Jenny had quieted down. "We want you to stay with us, and take the place of our little Mimi."

This was too much for Jenny, in her present state of nerves. She wept in Clementina's arms while Gene patted her on the head, and called her "little child-woman." Later, Clementina put her to bed in what she called Mimi's room. Since the child's death she had always reserved a room for her, keeping it white and spotless. There were white scrim curtains at the window, a big Bible on the center table, and a crayon portrait of Mimi on the wall. Near the portrait was a shelf on which reposed Mimi's toys—a white woolly sheep with a broken leg, a china shepherdess, minus a nose, and a wax doll with its sawdust insides exposed to view.

The next morning Jenny was as chipper as the sparrows chattering outside her window. After

breakfast, she and Gene, who could use his legs better than his hands, hurried down to Essex Street. Anne said she hadn't slept a wink all night, and appeared to be terribly upset when she learned of Jenny's departure for good. In truth, Jenny's going turned the Silverman household upside down, and that afternoon they quit the flat, rented furnished, moving farther uptown.

Right away, Gene was planning a career for Jenny. Melody and harmony flowed in his veins as of old—rheumatism couldn't touch that. He saw in Jenny the flux of his emotive impulses, and he was hungering to transfuse in her the tense vital and fervent musical themes of his soul. Jenny naturally responded to his enthusiasm, and was looking forward to a musical equipment that would afford her a niche of her own, in which she could dwell independently of her friends, and pay her just debts for value received in musical instruction. She had accepted the kind offer of a new nest on condition that she be allowed to pay for her board and lodging. It only remained for her now to find some sort of light employment to keep the pot boiling.

Her first lesson ended lamentably. Gene became quite ruffled; called her stupid, and begged her please to put her mind on her work. Thereupon Jenny laid aside her fiddle, and tearfully exclaimed: "I'm tired of work, work, work. I'm tired of my fiddle. It never brought me anything.

Everybody insists upon my being a useful lady, a hard-working lady. Nobody ever thinks of my happiness. Isn't it respectable to be happy?"

"If you keep on in this manner," admonished Gene, "you'll become a mere doll, with only pretty foolishness to your credit."

Jenny picked up her hat. "I've been badly treated all my life," she cried, "and through no fault of my own. I'm tired of being crossed. I'm tired of hearing, 'Now, Jenny, be good!' I'm bored to death with this middle-class respectability. I'm going out into the world to find my happiness."

"I dare say you have the right to do as you please," remarked Gene, with a deep sigh.

Jenny wished hard for Clementina, who happened to be out marketing; for some motherly breast on which to weep all the nerves and fidgets away. She now stood near the door. She hadn't the slightest notion where to go to find her happiness. She was somehow most unhappy and rebellious.

"Before you go," Gene ventured presently, "I want you to promise me not to do anything rash . . . run off with some good-looking young fellow, or . . ."

"Oh, that wouldn't be quite proper; at least, not for a married lady." The secret was out before Jenny knew what she was saying.

"Married? Ridiculous."

"It's true, nevertheless." Jenny confessed, for she had made up her mind to share her secret with Gene, seeing that it had gone this far. She added, in a tremulous voice: "I was married last August, but I was separated from my husband by the tragic forces."

"You absurd child!"

"Now, I am neither wife nor widow. I don't know what I am." Jenny bit her lips to keep back the flood of tears. "You see," she went on, "our marriage was annulled. My life is blighted forever."

"And now you are flying off to fall in the grave of your own digging," said Gene. Then to himself, but loud enough for Jenny to hear: "I always thought that young Renshaw was a scapegrace."

"He is nothing of the sort," Jenny returned, her eyes gleaming. "Oh, it's horrid of you to say anything like that. Royal is good. He loves me . . . he wants me . . . and I want him." She talked steadily for five minutes, leaving little untold.

Gene pitied her from the bottom of his heart, and led her on, for he saw that it relieved her mightily to thus unburden her soul. Finally he remarked: "You are young, my child, and entitled to all the happiness in the world. But I'm afraid I can't win it for you by wishing."

“ ‘If wishes were horses, beggars would ride,’ ” said Jenny, remembering a nursery jingle. “ ‘Perhaps I had better take a little walk, and think things over.’ ”

“ ‘I don’t believe you know what you do want,’ ” asserted Gene as he filled his pipe with the fragrant weed.

“ ‘Does any girl, for that matter?’ ” asked Jenny. “ ‘However; as you are old and experienced, I shall do as you suggest.’ ”

“ ‘Then please light my pipe,’ ” Gene requested, with a twinkle in his eye.

Jenny’s face was as sad as a nun’s as she struck a match, and held it close to the bowl. She wanted to sneeze—perhaps it was the tobacco; and sneeze she did. It was a pathetic little sneeze, but it served to break down the tension of the moment. Jenny laughed outright. “ ‘Sneeze on Wednesday, receive a letter,’ ” she quoted.

“ ‘Sneeze on Thursday, something better,’ ” Gene added, then took a long draw on his pipe.

Jenny left in a cloud of nicotine, and was soon in Washington Square park. A south wind, warmed by the spring sunshine, was rocking the naked branches of the trees in a gentle lullaby; it kissed the pools of water in the basin of the fountain where the sparrows were revelling in baths of almost Roman luxury. She paused by the fountain to think things over, when she espied

a familiar figure crossing the avenue near the arch.

Samuel Quiggles, for it was he, was swearing at a mud puddle which had left its muddy regrets on his highly polished gaiters; he went so far as to berate Binks, his man-servant, for not having warned him of the aforesaid mud puddle. A moment later, he felt a tug at his coattail, and, believing the tormentor to be a street urchin, he raised his cane, and exclaimed: "Drat the rascal!"

Binks laid a restraining hand upon his master's arm. "Sire," he said; "would you strike a young lady?"

"Bless my soul, no," said Samuel, as he turned about and faced Jenny. "Well, I declare, the little beggar maid." Owing to his failing eyesight he had not recognized Jenny first off.

"Oh, Mr. Quiggles," cried Jenny, in glee; "is it really you? I was afraid I would never see you again."

"The world is very small, my child," returned Samuel; adding, as he pinched Jenny's cheek: "Come, give an account of yourself. What are you doing away uptown? And where's that friend of yours, Anne something or other, who pretends to hate the rich?"

"I'm your neighbor now," replied Jenny; "that is, if you still live in Bedford Street. I meant to look you up this afternoon. Everything is strange

to me yet, and the streets in Greenwich Village are so crooked."

"You seem to be getting on." Samuel looked pleased.

"A spunky miss, that, sire," ventured Binks.

"Hold your tongue, rogue," Samuel shouted at Binks, who bowed in mean submission and held his tongue, like the good servant that he was.

"If digging out of Essex Street, and living in more congenial surroundings is getting on," said Jenny, "then I'm in the social ascendency. I'm living with Professor Jiggs and his good wife, Clementina, at No. 721½ Grove Street. I hope you will drop in some day and buy one of the Professor's cuckoo clocks."

"I take it that this Jiggs person has found suitable employment for you. Artificial flower making perhaps. If not, and you hold no foolish aversion to such a delightful occupation, I may be of some assistance to you."

"Oh, Mr. Quiggles!" exclaimed Jenny. "What a nice man you are. If you could only help me. . . ."

Samuel then turned to Binks. "Escort this young lady to Mr. Razetti's artificial flower establishment in West Broadway," he instructed. Then to Jenny: "Mr. Razetti is an old friend of mine, and there's a vacancy in his shop which pays fair wages. I'm sure he will engage you at once, on my recommendation."

"A thousand thanks, Mr. Quiggles," purred Jenny.

"After you have seen this young lady safely home," Samuel was saying to Binks, "come and report to me. Mind you, no loitering at Murphy's grog shop on the way."

"Your lordship," said Binks, bending his knees slightly.

"Milord," put in Jenny with a graceful curtsy. She had forgotten all about the old gentleman being a duke.

Samuel received the salutations due his rank with benignity, then put a finger to his lips. "Sh!" he cautioned, glancing nervously about.

Half an hour later, Jenny was telling Gene and Clementina of her good fortune, with childish demonstration; and how the sneeze had brought it all about. She was to start to work at Mr. Razetti's on the coming Monday.

"Oh, the fairies are about this day," she sang. "I am Cinderella, and this is my footman," pointing at Binks, whose huge shadow completely filled the doorway into the workshop.

"It's grand friends you have, Jenny," said Clementina, paying Binks the tribute of a smile.

"And it's genteel friends you have, Miss," Binks returned tactfully.

Gene brought forth a jug of beer, and Binks was not averse to laying aside his lofty mien for the moment, "to wet his whistle," as he termed

it. A most excellent brew, that, and a very agreeable old gent, the Professor, thought Binks, as he wended his way homeward.

On the Saturday afternoon following the meeting in the park, Samuel's barouche, with Binks on the box, drew up in front of Jenny's humble abode. When it rolled away, Jenny sat in solitary state, in an old-fashioned but neat-fitting frock and coat of black cloth, a green veil fluttering from an old brown fur cap, and her hands snug in her brown fur muff.

Said Mrs. Simpson, who lived on the second floor, front, to Mrs. Kelly, a top-floor tenant, as they leaned from their windows and watched the carriage rumble away: "Fancy the old codger in the basement havin' a lodger who rides in a four-wheeler, with a footman."

"Sure, an' she must be a gran' person," returned Mrs. Kelly cuttingly.

When the carriage stopped in front of Samuel's house in Bedford Street, a quaint, gloomy structure, the old man was waiting impatiently on the doorstep.


By the time they reached Thirty-fourth Street, Jenny's heart was going pit-a-pat. The gay shop windows, the big hotels, the pleasure traffic, and the pilgrims of folly and fashion, she beheld for the first time. Surely this was the land of content. Now and then curious eyes would glance at the old-style vehicle and its occupants, a funny-

looking old man and a plain wisp of a girl.

This magnificent new world unfolding before her eyes was Royal's world. Any moment now she might glimpse him among the passing throng. Why had he not sought her out? Why had he not written to her? Something like doubt for a moment dimmed the ray of hope glowing in her eyes. Grief and delight, joy and anxiety, crowded her heart—oppressed and then exulted her. Then, for fear of betraying her feelings to Samuel, she drew her veil, and imagined herself to be a mysterious lady in a novel.

Nothing exciting happened on their return trip, except at Eighth Street, where Binks almost ran down Sylvanus Hopp. Instead of calling down the wrath of the gods on Binks, who sat unemotional during the most trying circumstances, Sylvanus ran forward with outstretched hands to greet Jenny. Samuel eyed him furtively over his spectacles. Even after Jenny had introduced Sylvanus, Samuel, pouting like a spoiled child, settled back in the barouche, where he continued to champ his toothless gums.

First off, Sylvanus told of the good luck which had befallen him; a spinster aunt had died and left him a small legacy. He had given up his hall bedroom, he said, and was now living at The Monastery, on the east side of Washington Square, where he was giving up all of his time to his play. Jenny, in return, then told him of her flight from



Essex Street, and how comfortable she was in her new home.

Having listened to the conversation between Jenny and Sylvanus, Samuel seemed to be more favorably impressed with the budding playwright, and invited him to call. Any young man whose great-grandfather had been a Tory in Revolutionary days was worth cultivating.

"Now please, Mr. Hippety-hop, don't let good fortune destroy your castle of dreams," was Jenny's parting remark.

Early on Monday morning Jenny went to work at Mr. Razetti's artificial flower factory in West Broadway, where the roar of the elevated trains sounded through the long hours of the day. It was a first-class place, with elevators and plenty of light. There were no dark stairways to climb, as at Zollikoffer's, and no lurking danger, like Joe Levitch, to keep her in a state of constant dread. The girl workers, dozens of them, sat at long rows of tables, surrounded by artificial foliage, petals, and the wax calyx of flowers, with much green rubber tubing and glue in evidence.

Jenny's worktable was in a small room on the third floor, separated from the large workroom by a thin wood partition. In the room with her were two other girls, Stella O'Grady and Rosa Bartino. Here the flowers were brought for assortment and final inspection. To Jenny it seemed like working

in a garden of flowers from which all the fragrance had fled.

Stella and Rosa were of one mind concerning Jenny, for they realized, before the day was half over that she was blessed with certain prospects in life to which they could never hope to attain. Knowing that she had been recommended by Mr. Quiggles, the "aristocratic old gent," as Stella called him, for he frequently visited the factory, the girls were afraid she might be a bit uppish. But Jenny, with her peculiar knack of adapting herself to circumstances, soon won their confidence and respect. Before the gong sounded for the noon hour, she knew that Stella lived in Carmine Street, attended mass at St. Joseph's, and that her young man drove a truck; also that Rosa dwelt in a Sullivan Street tenement, and counted her beads in the little stone church of Our Lady of Pompeii, in Bleecker Street. Rosa's "fellow" was a guard in the subway.

CHAPTER XIV

SOCIAL climbing is at least of respectable antiquity. It began no doubt shortly after the Adams left the garden of Eden. Nowadays there is a distinctive and undeniable relation between dollars and the art of climbing; a certain unity, important to realize, but hard to analyze. Realists claim that there is really no logical analyses of the art; that results are obtained only through personal experience. Even after obtaining the goal of their social ambitions, no man or woman can with certainty communicate one to the other the things which they have experienced. They have assimilated, they don't know what; and yet they have somehow achieved the object of their social idealism.

The varying stratas of society are sharply defined in every community, and climbing has become a part of our habits. But nowhere, as in New York, is there a concrete independent realm greater than any that we shall have ever thought of; nowhere such a bond of union, which combines

a few hundred people into a group of social impregnability. This set, the upper set, contrives and intelligently manages its own affairs, with established entertainers, who form a sort of social bulwark against the ever-threatening power of colossal fortunes, or the get-rich-quick. An interesting set of fashionables, ultra smart, wasteful, arrogant, but providing exhibitions of real artistic achievement; and not altogether lacking in the purposeful and serious-mindedness.

In recent years there has been a terrific upward movement of many enriched and ambitious citizens, whose wives and daughters see no reason why they should not take their places in the ultra world. It is really curious how many magnates of finance and commerce, of the get-rich-in-a-hurry class, possess the keenest judgment in social matters. This gift of social shrewdness, coupled with a bottomless purse, is the bugaboo of the upper tendom. So it behooves society to fight back at those who invade its domain, and diligently to guard its pride and traditions. Its most powerful weapon is the snub. The snub is the gas bomb of social welfare; it suffocates . . . it is deadly.

The advance of the climbers is often marked with frightfulness. Fifth Avenue, figuratively speaking, is strewn with the torn and trodden battle flags of lost endeavors. There is no such happy medium as neutrality under these conditions. Once the lure of society speaks its message,

apparently sane persons become suddenly obsessed, the incarnation of quackery and deceit, the embodiment of all the petty vices—diabolically cunning.

It is axiomatic that if an attack is to be carried on to a victorious finish there must be someone in supreme command. Now that Royal had returned to the fold, Aaron and Sophia looked to Wilkins to renew the attack.

Wilkins exhibited wonderful generalship at the start by inducing Aaron to transfer his church allegiance from a small parish on the West Side to the fashionable St. Michael's, Fifth Avenue. Then Sophia, at her secretary's suggestion, joined the Lenten sewing-class, which convened on consecutive Tuesdays during Lent, in the parish house, and was largely attended by the elite of St. Michael's. As Wilkins figured it out, there were two women at least in the class well worth Sophia's cultivation; one of them was Mrs. Rossiter Jones.

Sophia was not particularly impressed with the first meeting, and came home rather crest-fallen. When Wilkins inferred that perhaps she had talked too much, or too loud, Sophia declared: "Why, I couldn't get a word in edgewise. The women gossiped incessantly, and no high flown talk at that. Why, I used to think that everybody in society was all prunes and prisms in their conversation, like 'May I be so bold?' Nothing like that. Some of the old ladies used terrible slang.

And there was Mrs. Rossiter Jones, the most aristocratic old lady in the whole bunch. What do you think she does? She cleans the canary bird cage and sorts out the family linen for the wash. She told me so. She had a cold this afternoon, and when I sympathized with her, she said: 'Oh, it's just a slight cold on my chist.' Now, Wilkins, did I ever say 'chist?' and would I ever so forget my rank and station as to clean the canary bird cage and sort out the wash?"

Before the next meeting was over, Sophia found out that it is the little things in life that count most. Following her secretary's directions, she hardly opened her mouth during the entire session. She remained so quiet that Mrs. Rossiter Jones came over and sat down beside her, and asked if she was ill. Sophia replied that she was feeling very fit, and then, quite by accident, she said she hoped Mrs. Jones's canary bird was well. What she meant to have said was, she hoped Mrs. Jones had quite recovered from the cold on her chest.

Now it seems that Mrs. Rossiter Jones had a weakness for canary birds, and she had been looking about all afternoon for some sympathetic soul to whom she could relate how her pet angora cat, that very morning, had climbed up a lace curtain and almost devoured her canary. Sophia fairly oozed with interest and sympathy, although she did wish that Mrs. Jones had been interested in

gold fish, for if there was one thing on which Sophia could talk at ease and comprehensively, it was gold fish. She had gold fish in aquariums all over her new house, and the old Italian fountain, in the staircase hall, was fairly alive with them.

Thus one thing led to another. Mrs. Jones seemed deeply impressed with all that Sophia told her about her new house, her yacht, her wonderful son. "Really, Mrs. Jones," she was saying nonchalantly, "my husband and I care very little for the frivolities of society. I am so happy in my new home, and we expect to live very, very quietly. Of course I have my pet philanthropies. What woman does not?" Then she mentioned something about the dress rehearsal, to be held on the following afternoon, at the Plaza, and how Mrs. Van Mater had insisted upon her attending. She also told, with a great deal of feeling, how she had loaned her house for some charity tableaux, to be given during the post-Lenten season, in aid of the Raphael Day Nursery in Avenue A. But about the Dressmakers' Ball, not a word.

The Dressmakers' Ball, it might be explained here, was another of Wilkins's illuminative ideas. It was chiefly designed to give the proper publicity to Sophia during *Mi-Câreme*, when there is a let down of the canonical tenets, and the spirit of carnival reigns. The invitations had already been issued, to the models, seamstresses, and apprentices, of all the smart modiste and millinery shops,

patronized by Sophia. Each girl was to be given the privilege of bringing her young man, and the big house was to be thrown open exclusively for their entertainment. Nothing was to be said in advance. In fact, Wilkins was going to make it extremely difficult for the reporters to get a line on the event. In this way she hoped to gain more space in the newspapers, for she had learned from experience that the people who give out nothing concerning their private affairs are usually more sought after and more generally exploited, than those who seek publicity.

So, on the afternoon succeeding the very satisfactory talk with Mrs. Rossiter Jones, happy thoughts fairly radiated from Sophia's face as she was driven to the Plaza in her sapphire colored limousine, there to burst upon the dress rehearsal as the invited guest of Mrs. Van Mater. Sweet pity for the lower classes,—hoi polloi, as she called them—faith, hope, charity, made her countenance almost beatific. Were not her fingertips pricked with the needle, from fashioning garments for the poor and unfortunate? Was she not to open her house for the down-trodden working girl?

But Sophia's entrance at the dress rehearsal was ill-timed. The lights in the ballroom were lowered, so that few noticed her arrival. And when the lights were turned on—hoity-toity—who should be sitting close to her but the five mammas,



the five gooseberries of Mrs. Van Mater's Garden Ball, who seemed to say, in unison: "Look who's here! That impossible, pushing person, Sophia Shuttles!"

Sophia looked around for Jolanda, but she was not to be seen. Jolanda, only a few moments before, had slipped away quietly to enjoy a secret smoke and chat with Polly Primrose. Besides, the headache powders which Polly had given her had worked wonders. She wanted more.

The two girls sat at a small table behind a screen in one of the private rooms where they were quite safe from observation. Polly had already ordered the cocktails and cigarettes. Jolanda looked lovely in her angelic robe, with wings and a golden halo. Polly, who was cast for one of the lesser angels in the Legend of St. Ursula, wore a diaphanous costume of purplish chiffon, with wings to match. She was a decided brunette, and her complexion olive-tinted. In the semi-gloom of the screened corner, she really looked like a black angel.

Polly was of uncertain social quality, and had been out five years. An impecunious aunt, who laid claim to some ancestry, had launched her socially, but Polly had had a very hard time of it, and had been snubbed unmercifully. Little wonder she had a grudge against society. Her one motive in life now, to bleed society for all she could get out of it, at the same time, striking back

for all the wrongs she had suffered at its hands. Above all women, she hated Mrs. Van Mater, who had done more to squelch her social career than any other woman of prominence.

It seems that Mrs. Van Mater, the year that Polly came out, was chairman of the committee in charge of some fashionable assembly dances, from which she took it upon herself to exclude Polly. To any debutante, this meant social obliteration. After that, Polly received few if any invitations, although she was seen at all of the charitable affairs, where the price of admission is the only barrier against admittance. Now and then she would be asked to fill in at society entertainments, for which girls are always in demand, especially in the choruses, as she was a very clever dancer. Just as the demand for young men who dance well frequently brings into the circle of debutantes males of uncertain moral fiber.

As it was, Polly fitted into the complex background of society. If the truth must be told, she was a floater and a purveyor of drugs, this latter pursuit bringing her in sufficient to keep up appearances—a floater being a girl who makes it her business to attend private social functions without the formality of an invitation. Few hostesses will brave the embarrassment of putting a floater out of her house. Mrs. Van Mater was the exception. At the beginning of the season she had given a large dance for Jolanda in the ladies' an-

nex of the Grosvenor Club, to which Polly came uninvited, hoping to escape detection. But Mrs. Van Mater happened to come upon her by chance, and peremptorily ordered her from the ballroom. Jolanda pitied the girl so in her extremity that she looked her up the next day, and apologized for her mother's actions.

Like many older girls, Polly seemed to exercise a sort of hypnotic influence over Jolanda, as she did over many of the younger girls—flappers, she called them. There was a wicked motive, however, back of Polly's eagerness to work in virgin soil in Jolanda's case. She had been quick to seize upon Jolanda's weakness as the best means of paying Mrs. Van Mater back in full.

There was a certain brand of cocktail that would excite Jolanda unduly after one glass. Polly had taken pains to order that brand. Just now, Polly was saying: "Well, there's one thing dead cert, Jo, you've the making of a good sport and a good mixer, something that can't be said of most girls during their first year out. It's too bad, though, you are tied to your mother's apron strings. Mothers are so unnecessary at times."

"Mother would raise an awful row if she knew I was with you," Jolanda remarked; "you wicked, fascinating angel. But let's don't talk about mothers. It's so deadly serious."

"I'm afraid you're going to be a dowdy."

"I shall be a dowdy if I wish, so there," snapped

Jolanda, crushing a cherry between her pearly teeth. "You've no right to say such things to me."

"Very well, then, have your own way."

"I'll not be a dowdy. I'll not . . . I'll not!" Jolanda pouted.

"Please yourself."

"Polly, please don't be so boisterous," commanded Jolanda.

"Of course, you know what a dowdy is!" said Polly.

"I haven't the slightest idea." Jolanda burst into uncontrollable laughter.

"Nor have I," confessed Polly; adding, seriously: "the thing that's worrying me is, who's going to pay for the drinks and smokes. I'm broke."

"And so am I," said Jolanda, in a calmer tone. "What shall we do?" She looked frightened.

Polly produced the pay check. "Here," she instructed; "sign your mother's name to it. Go on. What do you care? There are sure to be dozens of incidental expenses. Sign it now and then pay to-night when you return. You know, you owe me a dollar for that last headache powder."

"How can you ever think of such clever things?" asked Jolanda, as she labored to imitate her mother's signature. "You're a trump, Polly. I can pay up to-night and mother will be none the wiser. I'll see that you get your dollar, too."

Now you must trust me for another powder. My head is splitting. Please, Polly. Oh, you must!"

Polly fished a small powder from her hand bag—she kept them in a box formerly used for headache powders, and passed it across the table to Jolanda, who opened the white paper cover and took a liberal pinch, sniffing it up the nose.

"But you mustn't take so much, my dear, at a time," admonished Polly. "Just a tiny pinch, then a big sniff, and it will do the work just the same, and there'll be some left over."

"Oh, I feel better already!" exclaimed Jolanda as she made preparations to slip back into the ballroom. "My headache has disappeared as if by magic. The world has grown rosy. Oh, I feel so happy! And you are the dearest angel ever, even if you are black."

Meantime, in the ballroom, Mrs. Van Mater had welcomed Sophia, but in a very formal manner. During a lull in the rehearsal she had approached her, and said: "So glad you could come;" and then . . . walked away. It could not be called a snub, although the cold formality of the welcome rankled the plebeian pride in Sophia's bosom. She had expected to be led around, always the custom in club circles, and introduced to everybody. If that was the way Mrs. Van Mater expected to fulfill her social obligations, she would have to be handled with claws, not with hands. For a moment she loathed these people, with their disagree-

able traits, and the bitterness of her thoughts would have momentarily increased if Jolanda had not breezed into the ballroom.

"Have you saw (Horrors!) . . . have you seen Royal?" Sophia corrected herself as Jolanda settled on a chair beside her. Jolanda evidently had not noticed the grammatical slip; certainly she had not seen Royal, so she said, although it was almost two o'clock. "He'll come all right," continued Jolanda; "the dear boy." She leaned over sideways and whispered in Sophia's ear: "Of course, I wouldn't say that to anyone except his mother." In truth, Jolanda hardly knew what she was saying, owing to the exhilarating, though stupifying, effect of Polly's headache powder.

"It's remarkable how my boy is settling down to business," remarked Sophia. "In less than no time, he has won the confidence of the stockholders, and changed the sentiment of the press and public, who have the effrontery to declare that my poor Aaron is corrupt. Why, he wouldn't hurt a fly." Then she leaned over and whispered in Jolanda's ear: "Mr. Shuttles and me are hoping the right girl will come along soon . . . if she has not already arrived."

"Then Royal never had a love affair?"

"Oh, dear, no!" replied Sophia. "No, no!" as if she had not expressed herself adequately in the first place. "He will be a great catch for some girl, if I do say it myself. And if it happens to

be the girl Mr. Shuttles and me have set our hearts upon, she will roll in the lap of luxury, for his stepfather plans to make a handsome settlement upon him the day of his marriage. If anyone should come to me for advice, I should say, strike now while the iron is hot."

"Then you believe that man purposes, while the girl proposes?" asked Jolanda, innocently enough.

"Certainly I do," answered Sophia with a determined look. "I've been married twice, and I will confess—this is between you and me and the gatepost—I had to bring matters to a head myself."

"I don't think I shall ever marry." Jolanda spoke her mind abruptly. "Married life seems such a bore."

Sophia's hour had come; there was no doubt about that. Grouped about her chair were several of the prominent debutantes of the season, chatting with Jolanda, whose arm rested upon the back of Sophia's chair. Then who should sweep into the ballroom but Mrs. Rossiter Jones. Now Mrs. Jones hadn't the slightest interest in the rehearsal; she had simply dropped in to satisfy her curiosity regarding Sophia, and to confirm Sophia's assertion that she had been asked to attend by Mrs. Van Mater. Yes, there she was . . . and close beside her sat Jolanda. So what does Mrs. Jones do but glide over to Sophia and shake her hand. Then along comes Kennard Van Rensse-

laer, who was to be the bridegroom in the legend; and not having seen Royal's mother since the previous summer, he, too, was very cordial in his greeting. And while all this was centralizing around Sophia, the lights in the ballroom were turned on full. The result was like the scene in a play. Behold Sophia, discovered, surrounded by the pick of the assembly, for Mrs. Van Mater and Mrs. Jones were conversing directly behind her chair. And, then, Royal arrives. And Sophia, in the limelight, so that all might witness her act, draws her son's head down to her level, and kisses him with maternal affection on the cheek.

CHAPTER XV

JENNY found there was something left in life, vague but sweet, to soothe and quiet the stimulation of emotion. "At least, I have been loved," she kept saying to herself. And it was a sanctified, unfulfilled love, which she could bury in sweet lavender and resurrect at will. She could see herself growing old, with this strange contentment in her heart. After a while she would perhaps wear a frilled cap like Clementina's. Then people would gaze at her sad, wrinkled face, and say in a whisper: "Poor old Jenny Wren! She must have been disappointed in love."

Unconsciously Jenny bared her soul the next time she played for Gene. There was depth and richness in her tones, never before equalled.

"This day a great artist has been born," remarked Gene, who read between the mastering tones.

"My happiness is here," said Jenny sadly, "in this little body of wood." She pressed her lips against its satiny body.

"Ah, then if you really feel like that, my dear," declared Gene happily, "the world must make room for a genius. Now, every time you play you will tell the story of love, of disappointment, of supreme sacrifice. It is the ghost of memories that speaks the loudest in the voice of the violin. To-morrow, you shall play for the great Tenneys. I shall arrange for a hearing at once."

This glad bit of information gave Jenny a new emotion to feed upon, and in joyous, childish anticipation, she hugged Gene, Clementina, and also the china cat. She set to work at once on a movement by Debussy for her trial appearance before the matchless Tenneys.

In the midst of her preparations, Anne dropped in. Anne's star was in the ascendancy. She had been invited to speak before the Social Service Club, composed of fashionable women who seek to protect the virtue of the poor working girl, which was quite a feather in her cap. Jenny was so sure of herself now that she felt able to push mountains away.

But Jenny's faith in herself got a severe jolt the next day, after she had appeared before the great Tenneys. It was not until after they had left the big, cold studio that Gene told her the musician's verdict. "All sentiment, no tone, no technique," Gene repeated. "In other words, my poor child, the matchless Tenneys say you are amateurish."

Jenny gave a little whining noise in her throat. "It's my heart crying," she explained. "I have a feeling in my throat as if the moon was there, the pointed moon, scratching."

"If you can swallow the moon, then you can swallow the disappointment." Gene smiled, but it was a pathetic smile; he really felt worse than Jenny over the matter.

"Perhaps if I hadn't seen that poor old geranium on the window sill," remarked Jenny presently, "I might have played with less sentiment. Poor thing, it looked half frozen. Tenneys may be great, but he has no heart, or he never would have left that geranium out in the cold. The old iceberg, with his tone and technique. Some day he'll crawl at my feet, and beg me to play. Oh, you needn't smile, Professor, for I mean to work and work and . . ."

"I still have faith in you. Is that not enough?" Gene broke in. "Of course, Tenneys doesn't realize, as I do, that there is no one in the world quite like you, nor will there ever be anyone like you."

"God has a lot of dust left yet," chirped Jenny, "and He will continue to make unimportant, sentimental little girls like me, no doubt." She paused. "It must have been pretty muddy when He made the great Tenneys." Her eyes flashed fire.

When Jenny arrived at the factory, the next morning, she got another jolt, which came about

in a manner wholly unexpected. Stella O'Grady and Rosa Bartino had been among the guests at Sophia's Dressmakers' Ball, and they talked of nothing else. They showed Jenny the glowing accounts of the affair in the newspapers. One of the papers had an editorial on the ball, commendatory of Sophia, for having established a standard for the edification of the idle rich. Here was no foolish waste of money, no wanton excess, the editorial went on to say, but a hostess, in short, who loved and sought to benefit the condition of the working girls of New York.

Rosa drew Jenny's attention to a flashlight photograph of one of the fashionable modistes as she entered the house. "That's Lizzie McCutcheon," explained Rosa.

"And the diamonds on Lizzie," put in Stella, who had just finished telling how she and Rosa had received their invitations, through a girl friend who worked at the McCutcheon establishment. "Faith, she had nothing on but diamonds—in her hair, ears, and all over her stomach. Oh, she was a grand sight. And what d'ye think? Rosa and her steady, Joe Palmetti, went in a cab. Weren't they the swells though? My fellow couldn't afford a cab, the poor slob, so we had to ride on a 'bus. Only once have I ever rode in a cab, when me grandmother was buried in Long Island City. Oh, the smell of gas in Long Island City! I wouldn't live there if they buried me

there." She paused to take her breath. "Sure, the both of you are not paying any attention to what I'm saying."

"Please go on," pleaded Jenny, who had been looking at the flashlight pictures of the ball.

"Well, the house was like a grand hotel, with rugs, and pictures, and servants with powdered wigs, bowing and scraping."

"Grandissimo!" exclaimed Rosa.

Stella went on: "Mrs. Shuttles, the lady of the house, looked like a queen. She's terrible fat, but what's the odds, I say, if you've got a kind heart. And what d'ye think? They called out our names as we entered the parlor. A big footman says to me, 'What's your name, Miss?' and I says, thinking he was getting too familiar, 'That's me own business.' But Rosa, who was just behind me, gave her name, and the footman hollered it out. So I turned to him, and I says, 'My name's Stella O'Grady, if it'll do you any good.' So the old codger calls out my name. Oh, Gawd, wasn't I the proud person, sweeping into that grand parlor!"

"We danced in a big room, bigger than the ball-room at Luna Park," Rosa supplemented.

"Yes; and while I was dancing," Stella continued, "Rosa comes up to me, and she says, 'I'm losing something.' Well, off we goes to the observatory. . . ."

"You mean conservatory," corrected Jenny.


"Anyway, it was filled with flowers and plants like up at the Bronx Zoo," Stella went on. "In the middle was a fountain, and gold fish swimming about unconcerned like. Well, what did Rosa and me see but a loving couple. The girl was no dress-maker, I could tell at a glance. And the fellow, strike me dead if he wasn't the finest ever. He sure made one grand hit with me."

"Yes, and he talked to us," said Rosa, giggling.

"Well, as I was saying," Stella persevered, "this girl give him a rose, and he stuck it in his buttonhole. They certainly looked like a duke and duchess what we read about in the *Family Herald*. But when they saw us, the girl beat it. But her young man come up and spoke to us, and he told us he was Mrs. Shuttles' son. Me and Rosa pretended we was from Boston, and told awful fibs about our grand relations. He was just going to ask me to dance when along comes Pat McGovern, my steady, and it was all off. My, but he had beautiful sad eyes, and such legs, long and slim."

"Who was the girl?" asked Jenny with a tremor in her voice.

"Some swell skirt, take it from me," replied Stella. "She had a funny name . . . Jo . . . something or other. Say, Rosa, I bet there'll be a wedding soon in high life. It's up to us to keep tabs now on society, seeing we've been mixing up with the swells."



Jenny passed a miserable day, and masked the sadness and desolation of her heart as best she could. The thought of another yielding creature in Royal's arms haunted her until the close of day. To relieve her loneliness, she walked home with Rosa, and on their way, they dropped in at the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii. Jenny knelt down beside Rosa, and counted the beads of remembrance, amid the holy incense smoke of her love. When they arose, Rosa looked at her, and exclaimed: "Cara mia, you look like a saint."

Just before they parted Jenny happened to mention something about Stella's graphic description of the ball.

"Stella's no good," remarked Rosa, shrugging her shoulders; "she's a little liar. We never saw that young fellow and girl make love; they only talk together. She no give him any flower. He never speak to us at all. Stella she got stuck on him, and asked the footman, and he told her who they was."

"Then why didn't you contradict Stella?" asked Jenny, the light breaking through the darkness.

"I did once," Rosa responded, showing a scar on her forearm, "and she stuck the scissors into me. No, never again!"

Several days later, Binks called at the Grove Street address and left a mysterious message for Jenny. Clementina was frying ham for supper,

and Gene was just in the act of lighting his pipe with a hot coal from the kitchen stove, when Jenny rushed in and announced that Mr. Quiggles was to give a party, and they were all invited. Then she showed them the invitation, with a rampant red lion in one corner, and let them into the secret. Mr. Quiggles wasn't Mr. Quiggles at all, but a real duke, and his friends were all duchesses and the like. To all of which Gene said: "Pooh! Pooh!"

Nevertheless, the invitation had the general effect of disturbing the tranquility of the little household. Clementina, right away, declared that if she was to attend a duke's party she must have a new bonnet. She had seen a lovely bonnet that very morning, she said, in a shop window in West Fourteenth Street, and from her description of the same, Jenny remarked that the bonnet must be adorable. So after supper the three of them strolled up Sixth Avenue, to Fourteenth Street, just to have a look at the bonnet.

There it was, a cream-colored straw turban, with a gorgeous green plume—price, two-ninety-eight.

Clementina, after much deliberation, finally decided to purchase the bonnet the first thing in the morning. Then she began to fret for fear that some covetous person might gobble it up before she got there. To divert her mind, Gene suggested a little walk farther east.

They were soon in the gay district of Union Square, among the happy, cheerful crowds, all seeking the middle-class attractions provided for their amusement. Huge electric signs flashed in varied colors over the entrances to the motion picture theatres. Clementina showed lively interest in the flaming billboards, whereon were depicted doll-faced girls in the clutches of deep-dyed villains, and thrilling leaps for life. "Ain't it wonderful, the awful things you can see for ten cents?" remarked Clementina.

They wound up in the Theatre de Luxe, where vaudeville acts were sandwiched between reels of comedy and drama. Jenny was particularly impressed with the singing and dancing of a young girl, about her own age, whose "Josie, You're My Posie," and twinkling toes, brought her into immediate favor. The throng demanded many encores. It was a night of triumph for the little girl who sang about Josie.

The incident stayed with Jenny. The abandon of song and dance, the lights, the music, stirred the pagan within her. She had been held down and saddened by so many grave things in life, she thought, when she should have been happy. Here was the great release. Here, all about her, the labyrinth in which one could lose oneself and flee from pain and sorrow. It was the first time she had ever thought of the world as a refuge. Would it ease her weariness, kiss her bruised feet, and wipe the tears from her eyes?

On the homeward jaunt, just as they were passing the equestrian statue of George Washington, the silvery tones of a cornet fell upon their ears. Clementina had a weakness for cornets, and insisted upon crossing the street. They did so, and soon found themselves in the midst of a crowd encircling a little band of street evangelists. And there, on a soap box, his cheeks sticking out like cream puffs, stood Peter, tooting the plaintive refrain of that Sunday School classic, "Bringing in the Sheaves."

A gladsome meeting followed Peter's descent from the soap box. Gene squeezed his hand, and said: "Never in all my life, never, have I heard such cornet playing," which put Peter's efforts in a very doubtful classification. But Peter took the remark with rare good nature, and talked enthusiastically of the coming summer's campaign with the evangelists. He had only been in town a day, he said, and fully intended to look his friends up. Mrs. Zackman had given him Jenny's address. And all the time he was talking, he kept his eyes on Jenny, at the same time experiencing an emotion which had little in common with devotional cornet playing.

Then came Samuel's party. Samuel led a lonely life in the old brick house in Bedford Street, a narrow thoroughfare of small shops, and overrun with foreigners. Gone forever was the charm of elegance that once distinguished the neighborhood. Yet Samuel still clung to his patrician

ways, while his polyglot neighbors looked with certain awe upon the old gentleman who could afford servants and a horse and carriage.

Scrubs, who had been his housekeeper for over twenty years (Binks had been with him almost as long), was busying herself with the finishing touches, wiping the dust from the books and pictures, not neglecting the portrait of Bloody Mary. Scrubs was the holy terror of dust, grease spots, cockroaches, and of late, the prime swatter of the fly. Pity the poor fly just emerging from the torpid state of winter. Scrubs was chasing one now, with her wire mesh swatter, around the room, which rather annoyed Samuel. Yet did not Charles II, he thought, amuse himself with hunting a moth in the supper room of his palace while the Dutch fleet was sailing up the Thames?

A few moments later, Binks, in stentorian tones, announced the arrival of Gene, Clementina, and Jenny, who all made pleasing curtseys before the Duke in his cold front parlor. Clementina appeared to advantage in her new turban. Jenny, at the first opportunity, whispered to Samuel: "Please don't ask her to take it off. She has so few pleasures in life."

Afterwards came the shrivelled old ladies of title, including Lady Kenmare, the Duchess of Crewe, the Marquise de Fouche, and lastly, the two Misses McGucken, and the Misses Lily and Josephine Picard. They greeted their host as

"your grace," and seemed mightily pleased when he kissed their hands.

While formal introductions are in progress, it will do no harm to unmask these nice old women, as well as their host. None of them, of course, had the slightest claim to their titles. The women were all hovering around seventy, several considerably older, and in their dotage. Late in life, it seems, they had become obsessed with the idea that they were really of noble birth. Some people, unjudicious people, might call their mental state imbecility of mind. It was all make-believe, the idiosyncrasies of age; their titles the toys of second childhood.

Samuel perhaps had some claim to noble ancestry. Like Mr. Charles James Harrington Fitzroy Yellowplush, his mother had wrapped up his birth in mystery; he may have been illegitimate, may have been changed at nurse; but he always had "genlmnly tastes," through life, and there was no doubt but that he came from a "genlmnly origun."

Lady Kenmare was no other than plain Bridget O'Haggerty, who lived off a small annuity, in a furnished room in Carmine Street. The Duchess of Crewe (Susie Skiddy, a widow) owned a little frame house in West Tenth Street, and let out her spare rooms to respectable young men. The Marquise de Fouche (Annette Lestelle, a spinster) occupied a small flat over a grocery store in Varick

Street, and was kept by an indulgent sister, who lived in Steinway, Long Island, with whom she was on unhappy terms. The Misses Lily and Josephine Picard were spinster sisters who claimed aristocratic birth. They ran a genteel boarding house in West Eighth Street. The Misses McGucken were also spinsters, and had long been neighbors of Samuel, living in their own house in Commerce Street, just around the corner; typical Irish gentlewomen, who are becoming as uncommon in the neighborhood as wooden Indians in front of tobacconists' shops. Their only brother was a priest at the Church of Queen of All Saints, in Chelsea.

Jenny was enraptured with all that she saw and heard. The inside blinds had been drawn, and the candles lit. In the dim glow the old women appeared strangely youthful, with their cheeks and lips rouged, and bobbing false curls.

Lady Kenmare, who was fat and squatty, with a wart on her chin, turned to Clementina presently, and said:

"My father was Richard, third Baron of Kenmare, and my mother, the famous beauty, Miss Jane Darry of Tipperary." She paused to unfold her fan. "Isn't the Duke of Craw an irresistible man?" she continued. "When he was christened, the beautiful Marchioness of Stafford carried him under a canopy of silk. The Craws have been the leading family in Staffordshire since

the reign of James I." Then she leaned over and whispered this intelligence: "But, alas! all our estates and family treasures have been dispersed through sad financial misfortunes."

Clementina was rather flabbergasted at this high-flown talk, and turned, as a means of escape, to converse with the Misses Picard. Here she was met with more startling information. According to Miss Lily Picard, the elder sister, their family fortune had crumbled when the throne of Louis Philippe was overthrown.

The next person Clementina encountered was Scrubs, who was poking the fire in the back parlor. "I suppose you are a duchess, too?" asked Clementina. Whereupon Scrubs replied: "Oh, no, mum, I'm a widdy."

During a lull in the conversation—this was just after the arrival of Sylvanus Hopp, an honored guest, certainly a child of imagination—Samuel escorted Jenny to a seat before the marble mantelpiece, in the front parlor, where he proceeded to make an announcement.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said; "I take great pleasure in presenting our guest of honor. Miss Riano is part Portuguese and part Yankee. Sometimes, she says, she doesn't quite know what she is, although a little voice in the back of her pretty head often tells her that she is of royal descent—a princess, forsooth. Nevertheless, she possesses something, in comparison to which, all the gran-

deur and magnificence of kings and queens, as well as our own illustrious lineage, fades like the moon-flower at the approach of day—and that is, the rank of youth, the distinction of virtue.”

Then the host suggested some sort of drawing-room entertainment. Why not conundrums? So conundrums were unanimously agreed upon. Riddle followed riddle in happy sequence.

“When is a bonnet not a bonnet?” Sylvanus put this one, after a whispered cue from Jenny. Instantly, all eyes seemed to center on Clementina’s new headdress.

“When is a bonnet not a bonnet?” repeated Mr. Quiggles. “Well, I should say . . . when it becomes a pretty woman.” At which Clementina blushed furiously, while Jenny clapped her hands in glee.

But the conundrums were not near so exciting as the games. Somebody proposed “How Many Miles Is It to Babylon?” A general frolic ensued, in which Clementina’s bonnet almost met with disaster.

Scrubs and Binks, with grinning faces, enjoyed the fun from the hallway. Old age and youth fairly bubbled over with merriment. The Duchess of Crewe felt so young and kittenish that she suggested playing “Pussy Wants a Corner.” But it was high time now for refreshments.

Such muffins! Scrubs excelled in muffins. They fairly melted in the mouth. There were also cake

and nuts and punch. After eating heartily, the old women became drowsy, and tried in vain to suppress their yawns. Conversation lagged. Age began to show through the rouge, eyes became red and watery. Even the candles, like youth that is spent, burned low.

Jenny, with her overflowing youth, was sorry when the grandfather's clock in the hall struck six. She mothered all the old women, bundled them in their heavy coats and arctics, and tucked them in their cabs. How she loved them all. Sylvanus, during the afternoon, had revealed the truth, and now she knew them all to be, even Mr. Quiggles, nice old frauds. Was not her own world all make-believe? Was not the whole world a chateau of dreams?

CHAPTER XVI

SPRING was enthroned in Central Park when Gene and Clementina gave a May party for Jenny, who was anxious to pay back her social obligations to Samuel and his lady friends, with whom she had taken tea on several occasions, at their respective domiciles.

At a small outlay, Gene hired a char-a-banc from a livery stable in the neighborhood, and at two o'clock, on a bright afternoon, the party proceeded to the park. The site selected was on the side of a wooded and rocky incline, on the west side of the park, near the belvedere. Here was located a rustic umbrella house. There was a wildness and seclusion attached to the spot which made it ideal for picnic parties. Anne and Peter, who had been included among the guests, were enchanted over the place.

Towards the close of the afternoon, the entire party began to pair off. Gene and Clementina started on a quest for lichen, Clementina having a passion for plants of a fungous nature, Sylvanus and Peter were trying their hand at mum-

ble-ty-peg. Anne and the elder Miss McGucken were exchanging views on equal franchise, while the other women of the party catnapped over their needlework.


Presently Anne and Sylvanus paired off, sitting apart from the others on a grassy knoll. Sylvanus long ago had lost his shyness in Anne's presence, for she never made her femininity obnoxious to him.

But somehow to-day they sat very close together, quite necessary, owing to the peculiar shape of the knoll, whose flat surface would just comfortably make room for two.

As their conversation progressed, Sylvanus had a sneaking suspicion that Anne was closer to him than she should be by right of space. He drew in the fraction of an inch. Then he waited . . . watched. Sure enough, Anne snuggled over. The heart of Sylvanus sank within him. He thought: "After all, she is just a woman." But how cleverly she had managed it, without the slightest outward show of perturbation.

"I'm sure you will make heaps of money with your new play," Anne was saying. "Then I suppose you will bury it. Most bachelors do."

"Some I shall bury," returned Sylvanus with a lackadaisical air, "and some I shall devote to pay off my former landlady. I owe her six months' rent. She's a good soul, although she has never had the proper control of the sex instinct."



"Husband living?" asked Anne laconically.

"O dear, no!" replied Sylvanus. "She's buried two, and is now casting about for the third. I tell you, if the men do not learn to defend themselves as a sex, dear knows what will happen to this unusual world." He drew in a full inch. "It will take centuries before men will have the strength to combat the human nature of women," he concluded.

"Women are infinitely better than men," said Anne.

"Rubbish! Feminine virtues mean nothing in the scheme of life. It is the virile qualities that count."

"Equal rights will be the panacea of a mad world," Anne retorted.

"The outcome of enfranchisement will be to regain for woman her cruelty and her violence, and she will become sublimely unjust, like all forces of nature."

Anne shrugged her shoulders. Then she turned and looked straight at Sylvanus, almost upsetting his mental poise with her suddenness. "Mr. Hopp, dear Mr. Hopp," she exclaimed. "Is it possible that you believe that I am, at this very moment, suppressing an outburst of human nature common to womankind?"

"Sylvanus met the issue squarely. "My dear young lady, it is as manifest to me as the sun

which touches yonder peak of Cleopatra's needle with warmth and shining gold. As Cleopatra lured Anthony, you would lure me. All the time we've been talking, the thought has been uppermost in your mind. Every woman has the same intention in the back of her bonnet. Can you deny it?"

"Well, then . . . just suppose. Would you pity me?"

"You see, how it persists," Sylvanus returned. "You know full well that pity is akin to love."

"You seem so lonely. Anne spoke in a soft, purring voice. For the moment she was very feminine, very charming, revealing for a momentary flash the pure tenderness of her sex which takes men from their loneliness.

"I am . . . sometimes," Sylvanus confessed. He felt something vague stirring within him, a something which cannot be controlled by the laws which men make to counteract the subtle influence of women.

Jenny had slipped away unnoticed. A strange unrest had settled upon her; the bird lust to fly, to seek the unknown, perhaps. For several days past, Royal had been constantly in her day thoughts and night dreams. Maybe at the crest of the hill, she thought, where the gray stone tower of the belvedere rose above the treetops, she might be enabled to glimpse the abode of her wonder prince. As she threaded her way through the

dense growth of shrubbery she recalled the incident of the little boy in the story book, who had been lost in the labyrinth of a forest, and whose foot marks showed that he had wandered round and round, like an ass in a mill, until he had fallen down and perished.

When she emerged from the thicket, she found herself on a stone terrace, where the steps, hewn out of solid rock, led up to a miniature castle, perched on the ledge of a great reservoir. Far beyond, on every side, the white pinnacles and golden domes of the city reflected the sunlight. A breeze, laden with the perfume of sweet growing things, fanned her cheeks. Below, sounded the gentle lapping of the water against the rocks.

After peering through the mullioned windows on the ground floor, she ascended the circular stairway of stone up to the battlemented terrace, where she sank down on a stone seat. How quiet it seemed. From the meadows rose the shouts of children as they danced around their king and queen, gaudy in gilt and tinsel. How jaded and tired her body. It was so nice and comfy to be all alone. She loved the sense of solitude. Finally, she fell asleep.

Then she awoke with a start. Bewildered, she put out her hand to touch the luminous object that stood between her and the sun, low in the sky. She must be dreaming. But the object before her did not melt away into the vagueness of dreams. A

warm hand met hers, and a tender voice fell upon her ears.

Somehow Jenny was such a large part of Royal's thoughts this day that she had become as a spirit by his side. He had never relaxed in his efforts to find her in the maze of the city; had allowed nothing to blast the last blossom of hope. Strangely enough, when he climbed the steps to the belvedere, frequently the destination of his late afternoon walks, the feeling grew upon him that the place had become consecrated with her presence. And so it had.

Standing face to face, he saw Jenny in the light of a slim, dark princess, against a romantic background. He was glad to see that time had dealt kindly with her. Her flower-figured frock fell in graceful folds about her. A narrow band of ruby velvet encircled her throat. She held in her hand a wide-rimmed hat of golden straw, wreathed with forget-me-nots. The shimmering of the water below cast a glorious radiance upon her face, but it was pale in comparison to the light that shone in her eyes.

In the brief, pulsating moment that followed their meeting by chance, Jenny was conscious of only one thing—the holy calm of two strong arms. Then they conversed, for Royal had much to explain, and Jenny, much to tell. She was making a decent living, she had friends . . . she was striving to gain a foothold with her fiddle.

Everything, doubts, superficial misunderstandings, regrettable occurrences, the diabolical spirit of the world, fled from their midst as night flees at the first blush of dawn. Once more enthroned were the lofty freedom and the ideals of youth. They lived so tensely in the few moments that Fate allotted to them, nothing else seemed to matter save their love. They were still dream children, and realities played no part with them until Jenny began to reason, which played havoc with the mad riot of her senses. Royal plead for his happiness, but Jenny stood now cold, imperturbable, like a statue.

"Surely you have not lost faith in me?"

Jenny implied that she had not. Then she said: "Your prospects in life are more to me than my own happiness. When I hear of your success in the business of life, I shall rejoice, for I will know that I had my share in it. You must forget . . . me."

This childish heroic, as Royal termed it, made him want Jenny all the more; he would have nothing else.

"We may be pitiful playthings of circumstance," he said, "but we are children no longer. Won't you let me set things right?"

Jenny made no reply. Presently she discovered that the ribbon around her throat had become untied.

"Let me tie it for you," begged Royal. Jenny

gave her consent without glancing up, her eyes staring into distance.

Royal really took more time than was necessary to make a bow. The touch of his fingers was soft and tender. Another moment, and . . .

"That will do very nicely, thanks," said Jenny, still gazing into space. Then she added: "Hadn't you better go now? My friends no doubt are wondering what's keeping me away so long. We're picnicking close by. What would they say should they find me with a young man whose presence I could not very well explain?"

"Oh, come now, Jenny," Royal spoke, with passionate tones. "Don't make me out a greater cad than I know myself to be. Don't be so unjust, so hard on me. You know I should be only too happy to explain everything to your friends, if you will only give me the chance." He moved a few steps forward, until his face was dangerously close to Jenny's.

"No love is secure that has penalties attached to it." Jenny seemed to be talking to herself. She would not trust herself to turn and look Royal straight in the eyes.

"I can't live without you," Royal persisted, madly, blindly, his hand seeking hers.

"The time has come to put a stop to everything . . . forever," declared Jenny grimly, folding her hands and lacing her fingers together. She marveled at her strength; and yet, if Royal could have

gazed into her eyes as she spoke, he would have observed much that was soft and yearning.

"You don't know what you are saying, little girlie." Royal's voice wavered . . . broke.

Jenny steadied herself against the stone wall, steeled herself against the mad impulse that was growing within her, to mingle her tears with his, to run her hand through his hair, to touch her lips to his.

"In the end you'll be much happier without me," she spoke at last. "You are free now to go for the big things in life. I shall content myself with the lesser things. You live your life . . . and I'll live mine."

After that there was a long, painful silence. Royal spoke first. "If . . . if all you say is really true . . . if you mean it, then I should like to feel that if you ever wanted anything you would turn to me. If you won't give me any hope in the one thing . . . perhaps you will in the other."

"Well," said Jenny impassively; "you may hope a little, but not hope too much. The right thing, the only thing, for us to do now, is to look at everything sensibly." Then she looked him square in the eye, but quickly turned away.

"I . . . I suppose you will marry again some day." Royal put the assumption rather abruptly.

"Oh, dear, no," replied Jenny, somewhat disturbed. "I shall never want to marry again."

She hoped Royal would not press her on this.

very tender subject. She could never say that she had had enough of married life; in a way, she had not been really married at all. She thought of the red top, and grew sad.

"Then I suppose it's . . . good-bye." Royal punctuated his remark with a heavy sigh.

"Good-bye." Jenny held out her hand. The sooner it was over, the better, she thought.

Royal took her hand, and made no move to release it. "I do not want to leave," he said in an apologetic voice, "so long as I feel that you like to have me here."

"I do like to have you here," responded Jenny, awkwardly.

"You . . . you haven't changed your mind, by any chance?" Royal was still clinging to that little white hand. Jenny shook her head. Royal went on bravely: "Before I go, please do me one little favor." Jenny turned her eyes full upon him in alarm. "Walk with me down to the end of the lane and back."

Thought Jenny: "Why should I refuse myself just a little bit of happiness?" So she took his arm, and together they strolled down the path, known to many as "lover's lane," their perturbed senses soothed under the gentle play of lovely colors, quietude, and delicate odors. Not a word was spoken. At the end of the lane, they turned and retraced their footsteps under the green canopy. A little further on, Royal paused beside

a birch tree, and with his penknife carved the initials J and R in the tender bark.

Their parting was hastened by the advent of strangers. The lane and terrace was overrun with May parties, homeward bound. Kings and queens, with broken coronets, with regal raiment tattered and torn, their faces showing traces of strawberry lollypops, romped with their dirty-faced attendants.

Royal closed his eyes to his fate as to an executioner. Jenny watched his going until he disappeared through the tall trees, and over the hill. Everything was over. She knew that the thing was true. Yes; true. He had gone. She had put a stop to everything . . . forever.

Just then, Peter, followed by Sylvanus, both winded, came tearing across the stone esplanade. Anne pushed her way through the thicket at one side, while Gene bobbed up serenely from behind a rambler rose bush.

"Where in the world have you been?" sounded a trio of voices. "We thought you were lost. The duke and the duchess are in an awful stew. We've been searching for you everywhere."

"Perhaps I have been lost," returned Jenny, with a mist rising before her eyes. "I seem to be going round and round, unable to get anywhere."

Jenny's world was literally going round and round, and if Anne had not been quick to lend a hand, she might have toppled over.

"Poor factory child," said Anne, "the sun has been too much for her."

Peter laid the blame on the shoe-box lunch. Sylvanus was certain it was the raspberry pop.

"Maybe it's her heart," remarked Gene, who smelled a mouse in the cheese.



CHAPTER XVII

POLLY and Sophia were as thick as syrupy honey now. Polly, like the busy bee, never failed to light where the getting was the sweetest, and like the bee, she kept her sting deftly concealed. She had breezed in on Sophia one afternoon in the late spring. Sophia was in high spirits, with a season at Newport in prospect.

"I was keen on Newport myself," said Polly, "but now I find that Jolanda isn't going, so I shall chuck the idea."

"Oh, but you must be mistaken," said Sophia, showing some alarm. "I'm sure the Van Maters are going to Newport."

"They've leased their cottage," returned Polly; "so Jolanda told me this forenoon. Poor girl, she seems terribly upset about it." A pause. "By the way, whose cottage have you folks taken?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," Sophia replied. "Mr. Shuttles is in Boston, and evidently closed negotiations there."

"I should love to hear of misfortune knocking

at Mrs. Van Mater's door." Polly spoke abruptly. "Really, if it wasn't for Jo, I should not find it difficult to hate her mother."

"Mrs. Van Mater was born into society, we must admit that." Sophia was feeling her way.

"Society . . . I hate it!" Polly raised her voice in sudden fury. "I was born with the instincts of a butterfly. I live to completeness only in the glow and color of life. But society has cheated me of my heritage, and spilled poison in the cup of my flowers . . . crumpled my wings. Sometimes, I feel driven to desperation."

"Oh, my dear," gasped Sophia; "I'm sure you take society too seriously." As if Sophia didn't.

"What does it all really amount to, in the end?" Polly went on. "Why all this bitter struggle for recognition in a sphere where everybody is bored to tears? Society is distinctly feminine, that's why there is so much unfairness and intrigue. If men were at the head of this social dynasty of New York, things might be different. But now it's woman against woman. . . ." Polly showed her teeth.

"I'm extremely fond of Jolanda," said Sophia calmly. "My son seems to be very fond of her."

"If your son is made of the right stuff," declared Polly, "he will leave nothing undone to protect her name. Jolanda is in grave danger."

"What do you mean?"

"She drinks terribly."

"Impossible."

"She uses drugs."

"I don't believe it," asserted Sophia.

"Neither do I," returned Polly. "I'm simply repeating the vicious gossip that's going about." Then she added: "Every girl, during her first year out, has to meet the issue of the three C's—champagne, cocktails, and cigarettes. Jo's ignorance of the world has really placed her in a most embarrassing, I might say, hazardous position."

"My son is very compassionate. As his mother I'm sure I have the right to say that. He is easily influenced by pity. . . ."

"It often takes heroic measures to force an issue," Polly interpolated. "Suppose this gossip about Jolanda was scattered more largely abroad, like seed . . . suppose your son in his great compassion, in the bigness of his heart, should arise to vindicate the girl's innocence of wrong doing . . . suppose . . ."

* * * * *

Summer kindled its fires. Aaron had driven Mrs. Van Mater to covert by taking possession of her cottage at Newport for the season, which was quite within his rights; a security for payment in lieu of Mrs. Van Mater's failure to fulfill the conditions of the loan and social contract.

Mrs. Van Mater had isolated herself in a small,

semi-fashionable colony near Bar Harbor, where, by strict economy, she hoped to get through the season. She had been fortunate to sublease the town house for three months, to some wealthy people from the middle West. The assured rental afforded her pin money, and helped to replenish her own and Jolanda's wardrobe, to a certain degree. The full knowledge of Jolanda's weakness had terrified her at first, but as time went on she became more or less indifferent, when she might have saved herself and her daughter from their exigency. But she lacked the initiative even in her dealings with the house of Shuttles. With her inborn sense of pride and tradition she would suffer any indignity rather than step down from her pedestal, and fight back.

Polly kept Jolanda supplied with her so-called headache powders with insidious regularity, sending the cocaine in all sorts of guises, often concealing it under the embossed flowers, or scenic insets, of picture post cards. There were days when Jolanda would become strangely sullen and morose, then along would come a message from Polly, and she would emerge from her depression like magic, and glow like an ember. In this condition she had the usual self-deception that the drug creates. She thought she was acting like a normal being; she never thought for one instant that her mother knew. With the frenzied yearning for excitement, while in this state of exhilaration,

she would indulge in little outbursts, which were food for the gossips.

Gossip has been called an imprisoning aura that hangs about its victims with eternal menace—effluvium from the depths of human depravity. A great many women in society, who shudder with horror at the tales of cannibal feasts, will pass a pleasant afternoon around an alcohol flame and tea things, hacking at the weaknesses of their friends. Perfectly respectable women, who would not endanger the life of a fly, often display this inexplicable of human frailties. But it is the woman who has been thwarted in her social ambitions that is most to be feared.

Sophia managed somehow to keep out of the range of the claws of the pussy-footed Polly. She implied things rather than expressing them verbally. So far she had spent a very lonesome summer, having been wholly ignored by everybody worth while. Under these conditions she welcomed the week-end visits of Polly, who sucked in gratuities like a sponge. Polly was spending a week with Sophia, this was late in August, when Jolanda came to Newport to visit the Needham girls.

On the very first day, Jolanda slipped away from her girl friends and met Polly on the sly. Their rendezvous was an out-of-the-way tea room where cocktails could be had, and smoking was allowed.

“How dare you have such a nice time in our

cottage," said Jolanda peevishly, "while I am cloistered at a poky old resort in Maine."

"Why should you care, you poor little nun," returned Polly, "so long as your mother is being paid a handsome rental by the Shuttles?"

"Mother is becoming quite impossible," remarked Jolanda. "She's lost interest in everything, and talks of going to Paris to live."

"By that time, I dare say, you'll be married."

"Oh, never!" exclaimed Jolanda; "at least not so long as marriage means motherhood. Still, I suppose I'll have to go through the formality some day."

"Every girl needs a protector," spoke Polly, quick to make suggestions. "What happens after marriage, of course, depends upon the girl herself." She paused to flick the ashes from her cigarette. "By the way," she went on with affected indifference, "Royal Renshaw is coming up for the week-end. If I was a bit younger I would certainly set my cap for that boy. He would make an ideal husband. He's so easily handled. Some day he'll come into millions. That's much better than a title and a rundown castle. Besides, these foreigners make slaves of their women. I shouldn't like to see you a slave . . . to a man." She tittered.

"Too bad Prince Paul was called back to Roumania," said Jolanda. "I was quite mad about him last season, but I don't seem to mind now."

She bent over the table. "Oh, Polly, I have such frightful headaches. You're terribly stingy with your powders. Can't you let me have some more of them to-day? I've been saving up from my allowance, and can now pay you cash. The last powder was the tiniest dab imaginable."

"Cocaine costs money, my dear," declared Polly, "and it's very hard to get now in quantities. There are a lot of people besides you who buy my headache powders, and I can get anything I ask for them. I don't make a penny off you, and I only accommodate you, well, because I like you. Anything to oblige a friend. But if you're ever found out, you mustn't dare breathe where you got the stuff. Do you realize that I could be sent to prison?"

Jolanda was trembling all over. "What harm is there in cocaine? The best physicians prescribe it. Why, I could get along very well without it, if it wasn't for my headaches." Her hand closed over Polly's with a nervous clutch. "Polly, I must have a dozen powders at least to tide me over for a few days. If it's not around when I want it . . . I nearly go crazy. Please, Polly . . . I insist."

"My dear, you must learn to control yourself," admonished Polly, patting Jolanda's hand. "You've had enough for to-day. To-morrow . . . perhaps. Here . . . drink your cocktail."


After they had parted, to meet on the morrow, same place, same hour, Polly stopped at a sta-

tionery shop, on her way home, and disappeared into a telephone booth.

The telephone is the most modern trail for the wolves of society; it is much safer than anonymous letter writing, for there can be no comeback—the scent is lost. A few words over a pay station telephone, and the poison of rapacious teeth is diffused. The telephone goes into the very heart of the home, and very often the slightest pretext will gain the audience of the person desired, even those of high position. Audacious Polly experienced no difficulty in getting into direct touch with a woman, who was entertaining largely that season, and whom we shall designate, for the sake of convenience, as Mrs. So-and-So. Thereupon the following conversation took place:

“Is this Mrs. So-and-So? . . . Who is this? . . . Oh, it really doesn’t matter, you know, except that I’m speaking for one of your dearest friends . . . Please, Mrs. So-and-So, don’t let your daughter be seen with Jolanda Van Mater. She’s on for a visit, at the Needhams, and they say she drinks and uses drugs! . . . brrrrr!”

Mrs. So-and-So, shocked beyond measure, related her strange experience at the telephone that evening during dinner; and there were several guests present, who repeated her words to others during the course of the evening. A half dozen women of social prominence received the same mysterious message that afternoon, and naturally



they talked about it among their families and friends. In this way, by strange iteration, the wicked babble grew and grew. Nobody seemed able to stop its progress, much less to discover the source of its growth.

Before the week was over, the gossips were snapping at Jolanda until she was literally torn and bleeding. She was snubbed right and left. The worst of it was, she had been seen in the company of Polly Primrose, whose exploits were becoming notorious, and that was enough to queer any girl. But the snubs were administered with such finesse; the surface of things was so free from disturbance, that it would have taken a sharp and practised eye to catch a glimpse of the undercurrent. Society is never noisy in its agitations; its perturbations are so well bred, so finished, but its rebuke is none the less effective.

Jolanda faced the crisis on the day of Royal's arrival to spend the week-end, when the Needhams very politely asked her to leave. Jolanda, in alarm, called up Sophia on the telephone, and told of her predicament. Sophia, whom Polly had led to believe that there was absolutely no foundation for the false reports, was quick to offer Jolanda the hospitality of her home. Royal was talking to his mother when the call came, and a great deal of what she said to Jolanda was spoken for his special benefit. Thus Royal walked, even hurried, into the trap that had been set for him.

Clinging to him as girls often cling to their big brothers when in distress, Jolanda sobbed out the story of her persecution, with convincing argument as to the falsity of the reports. From that moment, the eternal instinct of the male to protect the female grew upon Royal until it became almost a passion. Of course his knowledge of the true state of affairs was superficial. He knew of many girls who, through some harmless, imprudent act, during their first year out, had suffered at the hands of the gossips. Jolanda, he argued to himself, through some innocent impulse, had overstepped the bounds of prudence, and some mischief maker had done her deadly work. It was only a momentary obloquy, and she could easily live it down. Had she not always stood ready to cover with silence the faults and frailties of her friends? He knew of several such instances.

The manner in which Royal undertook to clarify the air was truly admirable. As a starter, he smoothed matters over with the Needhams, and then urged Mrs. Van Mater, by telegraph, to come to Newport at once. And she had not been there a day hardly before her presence began to act as a sort of antidote for the poison of tongues. He also induced his mother to rid herself of Polly, whom he thoroughly disliked, although he did not possess that instinctive knowledge, common to women; otherwise he might have perceived at once



that Polly had had a hand in the wretched affair.

Polly left on her own accord, however, before Sophia could summon up enough courage to ask her to go. She had enjoyed her hour of revenge, inasmuch as Jolanda had been avoided and snubbed, and she departed with the sense of having paid Mrs. Van Mater back in full.

Sophia's social isolation thus far had been really pathetic, but the tide turned in her favor almost as quickly as it does at Bailey's Beach. The day after Polly's departure, she found herself transported to realms of bliss, said realm being a box at the tennis tournament. The five mammas were not in evidence, for which she thanked Heaven; but the Needham girls were there, and out of respect to Royal, they treated his mother like a human being. Mrs. Van Mater put herself out to be nice to Sophia, and Jolanda blossomed out like a rose that has been beaten down by the storm, only to be revived by the dew and sunshine.

The cure-all, the escape from poverty, from herself, was within easy grasp. She felt sure of Royal's pity, not of his love, which really didn't matter. And more strange than all, her mother was pressing her now to encourage Royal's attentions.

CHAPTER XVIII

TOWARDS the close of the summer, Jenny became vaguely conscious of a strange unrest. It was the artist's soul striving for bigness; if not bigness, then something to take its place. Jenny felt that the call came from the world and its revealments rather than from herself, and, for a time, she struggled against it. Resistance of an idea is oftentimes strong evidence of the correctness of it. Finally, about the middle of September, without taking anyone into her confidence, she answered the summons, and definitely hastened into the fulfillment the overpowering idea.

It was late in the afternoon when the blonde girl in the ticket booth, and the gorgeously uniformed ticket chopper, at Abram Turkeltaub's Theatre de Luxe, in East Fourteenth Street, noticed a plainly dressed girl—Jenny had come direct from the factory—pass into Turkeltaub's private office, where he was accustomed, on Fridays, to receive applications for his Tuesday night try-outs. Jenny was the last applicant of the day.

Thus it came to pass that Jenny was promised a public try-out on the coming Tuesday; more than that, if she made good, Turkeltaub assured her of a contract for his chain of theatres. The matter of salary was not discussed. Jenny was far too excited over the unexpected outcome of her visit to think of it, and Turkeltaub was too wise to mention it. Jenny did think of it, however, on her way home, and with delicious optimism, decided that two hundred and fifty dollars a week would be a fair compensation. By the time she reached Grove Street, though, she had practically squandered her first week's salary in buying pretty things for all the people who had been nice to her.

Before Tuesday dawned, Jenny took Anne into her confidence. She had to stitch wickedly on Sunday, locked in her room, in order to have her costume completed in time. On the auspicious day, Mr. Razetti very kindly gave her a half holiday, and she left the house, presumably to spend the afternoon and evening with Anne.

Anne's presence lessened Jenny's tension of nerves to some degree. She had never been behind the scenes, nor had Anne, for that matter. Her dressing room was on the stage floor, not overly clean, the walls being decorated with pencilled drawings and remarks on conditions familiar only to the performers of the "small time" circuits, who often play six shows a day.

Only two try-out acts were scheduled for the

afternoon. Jenny went on at six o'clock, when there was only a baker's dozen in the house. Anne sat in the front row, and was really more nervous than Jenny, who was prepared to play three classical selections, and an encore, if there was one. But there was no encore. Her playing fell flat.

She finished her turn, though. All fear had left her by this time. She was angry, righteously so, at the lack of appreciation on the part of the small audience. She hated the world, what there was of it, out in front, so she kicked back at it. It was a genuine kick, too, against thwarted hopes and a most discouraging situation—a sort of backfire. Also a very delightful capricious little kick. Instantly the world, what there was of it, was in an uproar. An old gentleman in the second row stood up and applauded the kick, and several women from the suburbs, who had missed the five-fifteen, to see a popular cinema comedian hurl custard pies into people's faces—the picture was to follow Jenny's turn—were so enchanted with the kick that they threw their corsage bouquets of violets upon the stage.

"I might as well pack my duds and go home," said Jenny, on the verge of tears, as Anne came bustling into the dressing room. "I'm a failure." She threw her pierrot costume aside.

"Nothing of the sort." Anne spoke encouragingly. "You couldn't expect that handful of low brows to respond to classical music. But what

a tantalizing little kick. That's what the public likes—some personality. Even Turkeltaub admits it was a good finish, and on the strength of that kick, he's going to let you try again for favor at the eight o'clock show. He suggests that you play something more in keeping with your character."

"I'm hopeless," wailed Jenny.

"And I'm hungry," Anne supplemented. "So while I run out and scout for eats, you think things over."

After Anne had left, Jenny took a long think, and in doing so she gained a keener conception of what a pierrot would do under the circumstances. She was sitting on a soapbox, with her legs crossed, when Anne returned with some sandwiches and bananas.

"My dear," exclaimed Anne, "you're irresistible, just as you are now, on a soapbox. And what was that you were playing? Sounded like a pussy cat's meow."

"So it was," returned Jenny. "She gave a faint meow, then imitated the sound on her fiddle. She grunted like a pig, whistled like a whip-poorwill, buzzed like a bee, each followed with perfect mimicry on her violin.

"Now that's something like it," said Anne, peeling a banana. "If there is anything our highly enlightened public loves to hear it is the grunting of a pig. None of your Beethoven sonatas."

So Jenny gave to the public what it wanted. The theatre was taxed to its capacity at the eight o'clock performance, when she made her second appearance.

First, she sauntered leisurely on to the stage, dragging the soapbox, with her fiddle and bow under her arm. She sat down on the box well to center, and, gazing over the audience, called out: "Hello, everybody!" This was unusual; no female performer had ever been known to put herself on such familiar terms with the spectators at Turkeltaub's theatres.

"Now, that we are acquainted, I shall let my fiddle tell you all about the flowers." Saying this, Jenny played the flower suite, which she had at her fingertips, announcing each motif in turn and naming the flowers. After she had finished, she leaned over the footlights, and asked: "How did you like that?" The crowd liked it immensely, judging from the applause.

She tripped off, then, peering from behind the wings, she confided, in a mischievous voice: "I didn't mean to go off to stay. I was just pretending."

Once more she was seated on the soapbox. "Now, let's imagine ourselves to be in the country." Then she mimicked the barnyard animals, concluding with the pig. "I'll just bet that none of you know what that last one was," she said; adding: "All those who do know, kindly raise their

right hand." Instantly hundreds of hands waved in the air. Some little boys in the gallery cried out, in chorus: "A pig." Said Jenny: "I'm glad I'm playing before such an intelligent audience." The house roared.

She closed her turn with a love song, into which she whispered some of her own sorrow and happiness. Poor little Pierrot! Crossed in love. Some of the sentimental women present had their tear ducts tapped.

Jenny's triumph was complete, so far as the patrons of the Theatre de Luxe were concerned. Anne was quite beside herself with joy. "That's the way to do it, boys," she cried, in a shrill voice, imitating Punch, as she hurried into the dressing room to congratulate Jenny, and to convey the glad news that Turkeltaub was to give her a six-weeks' contract. "He's waiting in his office now to hand you the contract," Anne continued. "I told him you would take nothing short of two hundred dollars a week. But if it comes to a pinch, why accept a hundred and fifty."

Jenny was all flushed and excited when she signed the contract in Turkeltaub's office. He wanted to read it to her aloud, but she said that she was in too great a hurry to get home; she was sure everything was all right. Had not Turkeltaub given her ten dollars on account? Besides, Anne had told him what her salary was to be, so she thought, and even if it was only a hundred and

fifty, she wouldn't grumble; indeed, she wouldn't!

On their way home, they walked down Broadway to Eighth Street. Anne insisted upon having a peep at the contract, so they paused under a street lamp, this section of Broadway being deserted after nine o'clock.

"I'm sure it's a hundred and fifty," said Jenny, "for I distinctly saw the figures 1 and 5."

"But where was the naught?" asked Anne as she scanned the contract.

"Turkeltaub's finger must have been on the naught," responded Jenny. "You see, he held the paper down on his desk while I signed it."

"Your contract calls for the munificent sum of fifteen dollars per week," Anne informed Jenny.

Jenny gasped. "Oh, he couldn't be so mean as all that!" Right away, she wanted to go back, tear the contract into bits, and fling them into Turkeltaub's face. But Anne's wiser counsel prevailed. Fifteen dollars was better than eight, and the experience would be worth double the amount. Then, too, with her identity hidden under the guise of a pierrot, her future as a musician would not be imperiled.

Consternation prevailed in the Jiggs household when Jenny let the cat out of the bag, the next morning, at the breakfast table. Gene threw up his hands and declared that her artistic career would be ruined, absolutely. Said Clementina,

"To think of our Jenny making a fool of herself to amuse the public."

"But you don't seem to understand, my dear," returned Jenny. "I don't do flippety-flops. I just dress as a pierrot and play snatches of things the public likes to hear. It means a better living for me, for you, to say nothing of existent possibilities."

"All my work has been in vain." Gene heaved a sigh. "To think that you, a genius, should stoop to play before a ten-cent audience. It's like casting pearls before swine. You are mad, my child."

"I don't see it in that light at all," spoke Jenny. "If I want to make anything of myself I have to make the break some day. I can't go on making artificial flowers forever. I've got wings, so why shouldn't I fly? Surely, there can be no harm in soaring and pulling down a twinkler, if only to find out what makes it shine so at night. It's a means to an end."

"The false vision of the world, the byway of pleasure, luring youth." Gene appeared to be very much downcast; he had lost his appetite. Clementina's luscious griddle cakes were growing cold on his plate. "On the stage you will grow hard, and all the beautiful things in your life will be crushed out of it. When you come back to us, the mark of the world's talons will be upon your face—your face that is like a Pentecost rose."

"My dear master," said Jenny, radiating with

affection, "don't you know that your hopes, your fears, are mine always. If I stray from my purpose, lured by the sweet surprises and discoveries in a golden world, all you and dear Clementina will have to do, is to draw me back by the golden chains of your love. This is my home. I love it . . . I love you both devotedly . . . and I shall stay with you forever."

After reasoning with Gene and Clementina, Jenny had it out with Peter, who pretended to be deeply shocked at her radical step. She also met with opposition from Samuel; and as for the old ladies, they still clung to the ancient idea that the stage is hardly the proper place to look for respectability. But Stella O'Grady and Rosa Bartino were delighted, and paid Jenny great homage, passing flowers to her over the footlights, and waiting for her at the stage door, with their "fellows."

At the end of the first week, Turkeltaub, on his own initiative, raised Jenny's salary to twenty-five dollars a week, mainly to counteract the influence of the "small time" agents who were endeavoring to entice Jenny to other picture theatre circuits. He also kept her on for an indefinite engagement at the Theatre de Luxe.

The third week was drawing to a close when Jenny was approached by an agent from Hosea Lazarus, the vaudeville wizard, so-called, owing to his genius for making "finds." Many a top-

notcher on the variety stage owed her good fortune to Hosea. His discoveries were ever the talk of Broadway.

Dolly Dimples, who was appearing in a song and dance act at the Theatre de Luxe, fused like an electric sparkler when Jenny mentioned the fact. Dolly occupied the dressing room next to Jenny's, and had borrowed Jenny's jar of cold cream on several occasions. "If you sign up with Hosea Lazarus," said Dolly, "it will be the making of you. That means 'big time.' My advice is, keep the matter under your lid, and when your week is up here, go to it."

Jenny, in Dolly's venacular, went to it. Gene acted as her manager in the subsequent negotiations with Hosea, with most satisfactory results.

A week later, "Pierrot from the Picture Palace" challenged a hearing through the rumble of traffic in Times Square. And the week was hardly over before Broadway began to "take notice."

Jenny was booked for a long run at The Regent. Naturally all the smart young men in town who frequented the music hall, with its gay and glittering review, were sighing for favors. But as elusive as a moonbeam was this itinerant minstrel.

Jenny realized now, as never before, how close she stood to the sordid things in life. One day the stage manager at the Regent said to her: "You have beautiful eyes, but you don't know how to

use them. Beauty should know its business."

The barbed remark cut her sensitive soul, but she passed it up in suffering silence. She hated the horrid old men who sat in the front row and made eyes at her. All about her a wide open encouragement—the market of souls.

When missives from unknown masculine admirers, and flowers, too—gorgeous bouquets of orchids, found their way to her dressing-room, she would cast them aside, not contemptuously, but in a rather frightened manner. Then she would have it out with herself in the looking-glass.

"Now, Jenny,—be good," she would say to herself, after the manner of a stern judge.

Alden Havens saw Jenny in her true artistic light, and his interest in her brought about a turning point in her career, just as the game of chess may turn upon a small pawn. Alden was society's pet wine agent. He loved jewels and gorgeous apparel, anything singularly pretty. He had the faculty of thinking up unusual and novel things for the entertainment of the elect. He gave freely of his ideas, which cannot be said of his particular brand of champagne. It had become a sort of unwritten understanding that when a hostess appealed to Alden for ideas, she should buy his champagne as a pretty compliment, in return.

There was a note now, in Alden's pocket, as he sat alone in a loge at the Regent, penned by Mrs. Rossiter Jones, asking him if he did not know of

some very clever person who could appear at the café chantant, to be given shortly under the auspices of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Kirkwell Lying-in Hospital. The note might have been written by a foolish schoolgirl; but all the old women in society were foolish over Alden. He was so nice and harmless. Mrs. Jones, in the note, had set forth how some of the women wanted tableaux, others a bazaar or bridge whist; and how one dear old soul had suggested a lecture on landscape gardening. Then, in conclusion: "The more interest you take in our entertainment, sweet Alden, the more champagne shall we order."

Once more Jenny's path led into Royal's world; the thought of their meeting again, provocative of more golden dreams. It was as if a poor pierrot, trudging the weary highway, had been thrown a rose, such was the significance of Alden's invitation to appear at the Ritz, which she had accepted. Her world began to smell very sweet.

And she kept asking herself: "If the choice were mine again, would I change my mind?" Had she really put a stop to everything . . . forever? All in all, had she looked at everything sensibly?

CHAPTER XIX

IF there is any fixed place in the world where things seem to go wrong at the last moment, it is at an amateur society function. The café chantant, as planned, was to start promptly at three o'clock. At noon, with little time left to put on the finishing touches, only two of the booths were ready for business, nothing had been delivered as promised, and the scenic artists and carpenters were still at work on the set which was to represent a street in Paris. The nine old women, all members of the executive committee, and officially connected with the Kirkwell Lying-In Hospital, were in a state bordering on panic, and their cracked voices were raised above the sound of hammering and the smell of fresh paint, in a severe indictment against the committee of arrangements, and more particularly against the chairman, Mrs. Rossiter Jones. Mrs. Jones was known to be present, somewhere, in the ballroom of the Ritz, now in a state of chaos, although no one person could recall having seen her in the same place twice.

As a personality, Mrs. Jones radiated with much dynamic sunshine. Although long past sixty she was as active and as chipper as a debutante. There are many like her in New York society, and they combine to make up the backbone of society. As a group they might be said to constitute the home-folks, if there is such a thing nowadays, for they act as a sort of stabilizer for the younger generation, ever in the feverish pursuit of pleasure. It does seem a shame that many of these nice old women must eventually join that great silent and fashionable colony in Trinity churchyard. And they are never so happy as when mothering a charitable project, or nursing their pet philanthropies.

Mrs. Jones was a woman "without age," as the French say. She always had a lot of young men in her train, and despite her corpulence, she danced almost as gracefully as in the days of the Patriarchs' Balls. But her chief aim in life seemed to be in making someone less fortunate in worldly goods and social station happy. She worked as industriously in manufacturing good will and happiness as a lace-maker, who, with hundreds of little thread-bobbins, turns out patterns of exquisite lace. Mrs. Jones had a hundred bobbins going. It was a wonder to some that she could find any time to devote to her canary.

If Jenny had not thrown back her veil, just as she hurried past Mrs. Jones in the entrance hall,

Mrs. Jones, perhaps, would never have entered into her experiences. It was the fleeting glimpse of childish, wondering eyes and a rather pale and pathetic face, that aroused Mrs. Jones's philanthropy. Then, too, out of courtesy to Alden Havens, who had been so awfully nice, so awfully sweet, about engaging this artist, it behooved her to make the young person feel at home.

"Poor stage child," thought Mrs. Jones as she followed Jenny into the room set aside for the amateur players who were to appear in the cabaret entertainment and fashion pageant.

In less than no time, the dew of a gentle soul was upon Jenny. Mrs. Jones was agreeably surprised at the refinement in manners and speech of the young musician. "I'm so anxious to hear you play," she said. "Mr. Havens says you play like an angel."

"I'll try my best to please," returned Jenny, with a ripple in her voice.

They had not talked long until Mrs. Jones recognized attributes in Jenny entirely foreign to the artifices of the world from which she came; they crept through the paint like the perfume of flowers, hidden but not despoiled.

Havens welcomed Jenny in a way that delighted her; he was bubbling over with festive spirits. And well he might, for all the tables were taken by this time, and much of his famous champagne was being consumed.

"So this is your bag of tricks," remarked Mrs. Jones to Havens, when she got him in a corner; adding: "She's a dear."

"They'll go wild over her," returned Havens. "She's so different from the usual run of variety people. From what she says, her stage experience has been very brief. She's country bred, and lives with an old couple, who befriended her, down in Greenwich Village."

Mrs. Jones turned to study Jenny, who reminded her of a moonbeam. The gleam of a noble impulse suddenly shone on the dear old lady's face. Her deepening interest in Jenny had reached a moment of curious significance.

Meantime, Jenny was exchanging pleasantries with Havens. She thought him a little overdressed perhaps, but he was so fat and jolly. She marvelled at the manner in which he greeted the haughty society women and girls, who were to take part in the performance, with a certain officiousness which none of them seemed to mind. Jenny heard him tell one stately matron that she had too much powder on her nose, and another, that she was "unhooked in the back."

Jenny was glad of a few moments to herself before making her appearance. The possibilities of pleasing this, her first discriminating audience, fired her soul. She would not allow herself to think of failure. Nor did the expectation of beholding Royal, after months of separation, affect

her so much as she was afraid it would. If he happened to be present, he would never recognize her in the world. She felt secure in the thought, and more so behind the mask she had decided to wear.

The entertainment was in full swing. The amateur dancers were being greeted with a tumult of applause. It was Jenny's turn next, then the fashion pageant was to follow. She was in the act of tuning up her fiddle when two girls, both in sports costumes, entered the room, and sat down near her. One of them held an evening newspaper in her hand, and putting their heads together, they pored over its contents intently for a few moments.

After the girls had left the room, Jenny crossed over and picked up the paper, partly to amuse herself, partly to keep her mind off the approaching test of her abilities, and also to satisfy her curiosity.

In cold black type she read the formal announcement of Jolanda's engagement to Royal. After that, she had the sense of standing upon the edge of the world; everywhere about her, the mystic vanishing-point of dreams.


She played as she had never played before, and the response on the part of the fashionable assembly was electric. It was a part of her turn to walk down the steps from the stage, and wander like a minstrel among the seated throng. At a

table, near the center aisle, sat Jolanda and Royal, chaperoned by Mrs. Van Mater. The sight of Royal released all that was wonderful and sweet, all that was sad, in her heart. She noticed that he was rather thin and pale . . . surely very unhappy. She would not trust herself to come very near to him. Her fiddle spoke what was in her mind. Little winged ghosts seemed to carry her message of passion and pain to the remotest corner of the ballroom . . . but not to Royal. Right in the midst of her appearance, he rose abruptly, and with Jolanda and her mother in tow, left the ballroom.

After Jenny had finished her turn, with the voice of her violin wavering in its song of love, she sought and found a dark corner behind the scenes, where she had a good cry to herself. Here Mrs. Jones found her, a sad and crumpled heap of white, and mothered her tenderly, wiping away the tears.

Tears . . . the price that every mortal must pay who goes trudging the world's highway in search of happiness.

On the day of Royal and Jolanda's wedding, Jenny sailed for Europe, as the protégée of Mrs. Jones, to complete her musical education. At high noon, the hour fixed for the ceremony, Jenny stood on deck, and as she watched the line of land fade from view, a big black cloud rode across the face of the sun.



The troth was conceived, on Royal's part, from the male instinct of protection. Jenny had placed herself beyond his ken. Having apparently justified his actions in his own mind, he stood prepared to stand the consequences. In tackling the big things of life, his finer nature was slowly succumbing to the influence of a world which robs youth of its moral sense. Yet he was not conscious of this change taking place. However, with a moral flash that was commendable, he had confessed to Jolanda the day before their marriage. And Jolanda had taken the fact of his first matrimonial adventure with surprising composure.

"After our marriage, I shall insist upon your respecting my feelings." That had been her only protest.

On the morning of the wedding, Aaron had wiped out all of Mrs. Van Mater's obligations, who glowed with the thought that she was getting the best of the deal, knowing the habits of her daughter. At least, she had the scrap of paper, bearing her signature, the possession of which was well worth the price of her Newport cottage. Aaron had not reconveyed this property; instead, he had sold it, and with the proceeds, and some over, he had purchased the house which Mrs. Van Mater had leased (with his money), as a wedding gift to his stepson. And in this transaction, as he had pointed out, Jolanda would hold the dower rights.

It was in this house that the marriage ceremony was performed. Great tragedies are usually associated with old-world houses. This unique reproduction of an Elizabethan mansion had been largely constructed of material brought from an ancient manor house in England. The illusion was there . . . of dark secrets . . . of catastrophe.

Polly was among the first of the guests to arrive, and she found her way immediately to Jolanda's room.

"I'm terribly shaky," announced Jolanda, the moment they were alone. "I feel as if I should go to pieces. Do you think you could manage? . . ."

Polly managed it somehow, and Jolanda's spirits were revived after several sniffs.

"When you are married, my dear," said Polly, "you can do as you please."

"I mean to," returned Jolanda blandly.

"Above all," insisted Polly, "don't be so plebeian as to have children. It will ruin your figure. Look at Penelope Brewster. She has one every year, and she hasn't a vestige of a waistline. Get a new motor car every year. They're much more satisfactory."

Mrs. Van Mater all along had been refusing information regarding the wedding to the press, except to say that it was to be a quiet home affair. While Sophia, just to be nice to the society reporters, had invited them to her house, where she

had handed out reams of matter, incidentally explaining that she had dispensed with the services of Wilkins because her secretary had given so much to the newspapers without her knowledge, "which was really very annoying."

Out of four hundred invitations issued, there were about two hundred acceptances, and it was a very representative assembly, although the majority came purely out of curiosity.

A wedding feast always means something for nothing. Men and women of the most fastidious manners simply gorged themselves with sandwiches and salads, and drank innumerable glasses of champagne and punch, at the buffet breakfast which followed the ceremony.

Grabbing and nosing is quite the thing at wedding receptions. Of course everybody received a box of wedding cake, and some even went so far as to grab a box or two for the folks at home, while the man's back was turned. Some of the women were seen to smuggle salted nuts into their reticules. Others wandered through the house, poking noses and fingers here and there, and running hands over and feeling this and that, to see if they were genuine. A group of real old women explored the upper part of the house, the bedrooms, on the pretext of looking for their bonnets and wraps.

And those who were not smelling and pottering about, were exchanging scandal, and belittling

everything and everybody connected with the function.

Taking everything into consideration, it was a most successful wedding party.

CHAPTER XX

Two years later an electric coupe rolled up to a handbox house in Grove Street, No. 58. The chauffeur, a young Greek, in a smart uniform, sounded his horn. The front door opened, and a fat, cherubic face, framed in a lace cap, peered out, while a voice, with a familiar tone, announced: "Just a minute, Angelo."

Clementina closed the door, and joined Gene in his dove-cot office, built under the stairs, at the rear of the hall, where the Professor sat before a mission wood desk, busily engaged sticking stamps on letters.

"Ah, here she comes!" said Gene, partly to himself, and partly to his wife, who was fussing with the sash curtains at the window, which looked out on a cunning backyard garden, where boxes of bay trees encircled a bird's fountain.

"Better hurry, my dear," called out Clementina, addressing no one in particular; at least, no one within sight.

There was a patter of feet on the white stair-

way, then a sudden halt, for Jenny had paused in her flight downstairs, to peer into a small mirror on the landing, to rub the powder in on her nose.

Having finished with her nose, Jenny went down to her manager's office, where without seemingly the slightest provocation, she began to stamp her pretty feet, while her cheeks grew poppy red.

"I won't . . . I won't . . . I won't!" she protested.

Do not all great artists fly into tantrums without any apparent cause?

"I've told you, time and again, dear Mr. Manager," Jenny rattled on, "that I would never appear on the same programme with the great Tenneys."

"I suppose that settles it," said Gene, with a sigh.

"Of course if you think best, dear manager, I'll do as you say," Jenny granted. "You know I never speak ill of any person whatever my private opinion may be. But somebody is very much wrought up because his future is likely to be dimmed by one who is amateurish and who plays with too much sentiment. I'm not mentioning any names."

"My dear child," put in Clementina; "it's half past ten, and the concert begins at eleven."

"All right, Tina," said Jenny, patting Clementina's fat cheek.

"Music in the morning," observed Clementina,

"before folks are hardly out of bed. It's a crazy world we're living in."

But Jenny thought it a very beautiful world as Angelo guided her coupe with skill through the dense traffic of Fifth Avenue, to the Waldorf-Astoria, where she was to appear at the first of a series of fashionable morning musicales, having been engaged through the instrumentation of her fairy godmother, Mrs. Rossiter Jones. Indeed, if it had not been for the sympathy and support of this estimable person, Jenny might still be numbered among the unknown.

As the dowager's protégée, she had shown rather remarkable advancement while abroad. So quickly had Jenny forged herself forward, that she had been commanded on several instances to play before royalty. A real princess had kissed her on the cheek, and she had been crowned with roses by a Queen Mother.

The great war had hastened her return; but even at that, she came back fully capable and fitted to adorn the highest musical circles. Her New York debut was made under fashionable patronage; dear Mrs. Jones saw to that. And the audience was tremendously alive to her genius from the very start. The critics called it a surpassingly brilliant performance. Her tone, they avowed, was of incomparable bigness; she had warmth, vitality . . . she was noble and emotionally fervid . . . gracious, tender, vivacious . . .

and goodness only knows what else. She had been interviewed by the special writers on the newspapers and weeklies, who told of her great love for her fiddle—how she put it to bed, like a child, *et cetera*.

After a tour of the larger cities, Jenny had taken possession of the little house in Grove Street, a thoroughfare now given over largely to the habitation of artists and literary folk—a rather queer but interesting assortment,—at a moderate rental, with Clementina installed as housekeeper. Gene acted as her manager. The tiny shop, further down the street, was closed, and all the broken dolls, cuckoo clocks, and scroll saw novelties, boxed and stored in the attic at No. 58. With her first earnings Jenny had furnished the house very simply but effectively, and had purchased, foolishly, perhaps, an electric coupe, on the time payment plan. Some day she hoped to repay Mrs. Jones, in spite of that lady's objections. As Mrs. Jones often pronounced, no genius should be harassed by debts.

Her success had been almost instantaneous. The music-loving public, aside from her remarkable endowment for music, adored her for her simplicity. They liked the simple, pretty frocks she wore. Already there was a Jenny Wren brown in the marts of trade and fashion, and a Jenny Wren vanity bag, fashioned like a bird's nest. Some of the coiffeurs were adopting the Jenny Wren wings

of hair, for Jenny always wore her hair over her ears like wings, and a loosely coiled knot at the nape of her neck.

Most of all, they liked the story she told on her violin: the deep, low tones of hope and fear, the ecstasy of blushing love, of virgin pride, of bosom young, of heart's fire—all mingled somehow into the perpetual thought of mankind. Some of the critics declared that as an artist she appealed largely to the women, which was the nicest possible thing that could have been said about her.

A vast assembly of women was now eagerly awaiting her appearance at the morning musicale. Thrilled to her fingertips with expectation and the joy of living, Jenny entered the hotel. In the corridor, quite unexpectedly, she bumped into Anne Silverman, who was rushing to a suffrage breakfast, there to speak on "The Futurist Woman." Anne was getting on well, too. She was now an ardent disciple of the new gospel of feminine violence, and was largely in demand. Her fuss and feathers had given way to a simple tailored attire, with a skirt that was almost trousers, and a strut that was almost manly.

"Well, how's things coming?" asked Anne, as she parked a smart walking stick under her arm and fished in her pocket for her cigarette case.

"Splendidly," announced Jenny, as she gave Anne's mannish butterfly bow an intimate twist. "Can't you drop in at the musicale?"

"Awfully sorry, old girl," replied Anne, throwing back her shoulders, "but I'm down for a serious talk, and one has got to collect one's thoughts, hasn't one? At any rate, I'm terribly glad to see you getting on so well. I'm proud of myself for the little assistance I gave you in the old days." She paused. "Did I ever pay you back that fifty cents I borrowed? I should feel a rotter if I hadn't done so, you know."

"Yes; you silly goose," returned Jenny; adding: "I shall never be able to repay you for taking me in that night when I came to New York alone."

"I dare say you haven't forgotten the day when you slapped the amorous policeman's face. That incident marked the birth of your independence. It's a wonderful thing to be invested with the franchise of freedom. As a sex we are down-trodden. Just imagine what might have happened to you if you had been tied up for life with that tinpot prince."

"Please, Anne," cautioned Jenny. "You know it annoys me dreadfully to have you speak in that way of some one whose memory is very dear to me. I don't mind your raking up the amorous policeman or the wicked Joe Levitch, but you must respect my feelings. . . ."

"Have you seen Mr. Hippety-hop lately?" Anne switched the subject in her own inimitable way. "I saw his play the other night. It's a fine

piece of cleverness, only a little hard on the women. Just fancy, only one woman in the cast, and she's horrid."


"Oh, that's easily explained," asserted Jenny. "Mr. Hippety-hop thinks all women are horrid. He said he could have made the play just as interesting without her, and that he only put a woman in the plot, just like God put her on earth, to show what terrible mistakes can be made by the most superior intellects."

"I'm afraid that Sylvanus, like all men, views a woman in error," Anne declared. "If we were entitled to enjoy the equal rights of citizenship with him, he would not think or preach as he does. A woman is not necessarily a breeder of children, but a maker of men, in the highest sense. Then again, God does not intend that we should all marry. The world must progress, and to such as you He gives genius instead of motherhood."

"But I know a lot of musicians who are happily married, and have lots of children," Jenny replied promptly.

"You evidently refer to the male musician," said Anne. "The male genius cannot put all of his passion into his work, but a woman can. She is more capable of living within herself."

"Well, then, I know women musicians," Jenny insisted,—“opera singers, painters, and sculptors, too, who find time to love . . . and to bear children.”



"I don't quite like the way you said that, my dear," Anne remonstrated gently. "Surely you will never sacrifice your art for love. What irresistible male has been pouring the beguiling medicine of love into your pretty ears?"

"It comes to me in dreams . . . beautiful dreams," sighed Jenny.

"You poor, misguided child," Anne sympathized. "Are you not content to let your art alone nestle close to your bosom?"

"Sometimes I yearn for something else," Jenny stammered, "to hold close to my breast—oh, so close!"

"Do you mean a harp, or a 'cello, perhaps?" Anne asked.

"No; I mean a baby," confessed Jenny. "Oh, I think it would be lovely to have a lot of little Jenny Wrens fluttering about me; mouths to feed, and a warm place to nestle them in, under my wings."

"And what about the male bird?"

"Oh, I hadn't taken him into consideration at all," was Jenny's reply; "simply because the only one I should ever really care for belongs to another. . . ." She stopped short.

"Then your prince is married again?" Anne spoke as quick as a wink.

Jenny thought to herself: "Now, I have put my foot into it." And she was about to falter out a reply, when Mrs. Rossiter Jones hove in view, and

Jenny was saved from further pumping on the part of Anne.

That night Jenny got herself into more hot water, for her mind was on Royal. She simply had to talk to someone about him, and this someone happened to be Gene.

"I'm so worried about Royal," Jenny began. "They say he's very unhappy."

"But why should you worry?" Gene retorted, inquiringly. "The ties that bound you to him have been broken, and all obligations stopped, once and for all."

"I see no reason in the world why we shouldn't be friends," Jenny persisted. "When we parted for the last time, I told Royal that if ever I was in need of him I would send for him. He exacted that promise from me."

"Foolish child," protested Gene. "You lock the door in the young man's face, then throw him the key from the window. For all he knows, you may be married again yourself."

"Oh, but I told him that I should never marry again," said Jenny. "I thought he might like to know this, well, on general principles."

"You mean dangerous principles," Gene expounded. "I suppose you would think nothing of asking him down to dinner some fine evening?"

"That's just exactly what I was planning to do," stated Jenny succinctly, and innocently enough. "There are many things about which I

should like to have his opinion. He has such splendid judgment. Surely there could be no wrong in that. Royal is a man of honor, in matters of honor."

"You're hopeless," gasped Gene. "Go to bed, and forget all about him." As if Jenny could.


She was soon nestled in her little four-poster bed, however, with its dainty chintz draperies. As her head touched the pillow she recalled something she had read that afternoon:

". . . must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee."

Sometime later, she awoke in a state of anxious suspense. Her first thought was, something terrible has happened to Royal, for he was ever with her, in her nights of memories and sighs.

She crept from bed. She was sure she heard someone outside her bedroom door. So she tiptoed across the room, and, standing by the door, uttered a slight, "Ahem!" Then she thought: "If it's a burglar, that will frighten him away." But it was only Clementina.

Jenny opened the door a bit and peeped out into the hall, where Clementina stood in her flannel nightgown and frilled nightcap, with one hand shading her eyes from the candle flame.



"I wasn't sure I had locked the front door," explained Clementina, "and I couldn't sleep till I made certain. I'm sorry if I woke you up."

"Oh, but it was something else that awakened me," Jenny admitted. "I was terribly frightened."

"Did you look under the bed?" asked Clementina.

"Yes; and nobody there," whispered Jenny.

There may have been something psychological in Jenny's sudden awakening and anxiety for Royal; maybe not.

CHAPTER XXI

ROYAL and Jolanda had returned from the opera, only to resume the angry dispute that had been going on intermittently ever since their marriage. This will account for Royal's restlessness and his presence in the library at two o'clock in the morning.

But it will not account for the presence of a burglar in the house. It was Jolanda's superb rope of pearls that had lured the malefactor from the vicinity of the opera house, where he made it his business to keep tab on society's jewels, which are so often recklessly displayed by the owners before the crowd of curious onlookers who throng about the lobby. He had gained entrance through the rear basement; the trailing taxi, operated by a confederate, was chugging half a block away, near a house where a dance was in progress. Presently the lights in the library were extinguished. The staging was perfect for a spectacular haul and a quick getaway.

The burglar groped his way cautiously from the basement to the entrance hall, on the ground

floor, thence up the stone stairway to the reception hall, which adjoined the library. He was an old hand at the game, and preyed largely upon society. This was his first trick after three years up the river, and he still wore the pallor of prison. He was taking a desperate chance, but he was hard up, and pearls were easily disposed of singly, and the profits enormous. The gems in question were a recent gift from Sophia, who was trying with all her might and main to bridge the chasm that separated her son and daughter-in-law as man and wife.

In passing through the reception hall, the rogue's eyes fell upon an old carved desk, and he might have passed it by if the electric flash had not revealed a secret drawer. With a clever twist of his jimmy, he opened the drawer, only to find a few rusty pen points, a bit of sealing wax, and a typewritten memorandum of no value whatsoever. With a smothered oath, he crumpled the scrap of paper in his hand, and flung it aside. In doing so, he dropped his jimmy, which fell with a dull thud on the floor.

Almost instantly, the room was flooded with light. The noise had awakened Royal, who had elected to spend the night on a couch in the library. Taken wholly unawares, the burglar threw up his hands.

Royal was cool and collected. "Well, what are you looking for?" he asked.

There was philanthropy in his eyes. Perhaps the man had been driven to desperation by hunger; he looked it. In the benignity of his heart he would have liked to have talked things over with the intruder. It was just on the end of his tongue to suggest mediation, seeing that no weapons were displayed, when the thief sprang upon him like an infuriated animal.

Royal staggered back under the weight of the culprit's body, and struggled to free himself with his right arm, which the thief crumbled with a grip of iron, at the same time sinking his teeth into the bared wrist. The blood spurted from the ugly wound.

After that Royal became a maddened creature of agility and strength, as if the poison of the rogue's teeth had inoculated him with a deadly virus.

The thief realized now that he was dealing, not with a placid young man, with benevolence in his eyes, but a demon. With a dextrous wrench of his shoulder, Royal succeeded in freeing his right arm. With a quick movement of his left leg, he loosened his opponent's tentacle-like foothold upon the floor. His fingers, gory and clutching, were at the burglar's throat.

The thief was gasping for breath; the blood trickled from his nose, while his face grew livid from strangulation. Between gasps and gurgles he plead for mercy.

In the struggle they had worked their way from the center of the room to the head of the stone stairway; and it had been a noiseless battle, on the thick rugs, like wolves tear at each other on a carpet of snow, in the silence of the night.

The burglar was all in. But Royal, with strength that was almost diabolical, gave no ear to mercy. Picking up the half senseless form, he flung it down the stairway. Supporting himself by the iron balustrade, and panting for breath, he stood at the head of the stairs and watched the burglar gather himself together, and crawl through the door that led to the basement. A few minutes later, he found that the intruder had made good his escape. He would not alarm the police now . . . to-morrow perhaps.

He groaned as he saw his reflection in the mirror on the carved desk in the reception hall. His face was haggard and bloody, his hair dishevelled, and his shirt torn into ribbons. He sank down on a chair by the desk, and sat there for a long time without moving, utterly exhausted.

Reviving presently, he caught sight of the crumpled scrap of paper on the floor, which the burglar had discarded. He picked it up, smoothed out the wrinkles, and there, in black and white, the compact that had existed between his next of kin and Mrs. Van Mater, was revealed to his amazing eyes.

It appears Mrs. Van Mater had religiously

guarded the memorandum for a time, but had eventually stuffed it away in the drawer of the Italian desk, and had departed for Paris, forgetting all about it. And before Royal had done with the perusal of it, the blood from the wound in his wrist had stained the document. Viewing the scrap of paper in all its dire significance, he somehow had the feeling that his life blood had been spilt in the negotiations.

With intuitive knowledge and penetration he saw through the whole dastardly affair. His marriage to Jolanda, the fulfillment of a dishonorable compact.

Two years of torment and humiliation, for Jolanda had steadfastly refused to live with him as his wife. She had not heard the sound of strife, nor would she have understood had he aroused her, because she lay now in the heavy stupor of drugs.

He rose from his chair, and staggered towards the stairs, which led to her bedroom, drunk with rage. In the dead of night, he seemed to undergo a weird change. He mumbled to himself, harsh words of vindication; he shook his fist, figuratively, at the whole world. The simplicity, the harmlessness of youth, had died within him. In its stead had been born the lust to war against the world, to strive at any cost for the mastery of the things that had oppressed him, tricked him. Everything now was his prey, to be utterly vanquished.

He knocked at Jolanda's bedroom door. There was no response. He called her by name. Still there was no reply. Her silence maddened him all the more. He beat upon the door; he threw his full weight against it. He was in the mood that drives drunken soldiers to tear pictures from the walls, to set fire to things of priceless value, to commit wanton destruction.

The door crashed open, and hung on a broken hinge. As Royal lunged forward, Jolanda sat up in bed, terrified. A shaded lamp at the bedside cast its soft radiance over her.

"You see!" exclaimed Royal, showing the bloody imprint of teeth on his wrist. "I got that while protecting you from a burglar."

"That's no reason why you should burst into my room like a maniac," retorted Jolanda.

"My place is here," cried Royal, "and here I'm going to remain."

Jolanda's face, already pale, blanched deadly white.

"Of course you slept through it all," resumed Royal.

"Naturally," Jolanda carelessly observed.

"Hardly natural," declared Royal; "you were stupefied."

Jolanda's lips twitched; her body trembled. "How dare you talk to me like that? It's a lie . . . a lie!"

"It's the disagreeable truth," shouted Royal,

"and I'm getting sick and tired of masquerading behind a cloak of lies and false optimism . . . of standing as a buffer between you and the stern realities of life. I'm wearied of being made a pawn in a game . . . your little game."

"Game? What do you mean?"

"Read this." Royal brandished before Jolanda's face the overwhelming proof constituted by that bit of paper.

She scanned it, then tossed it back to him. "Well, what of it?"

"As if you didn't know," cried Royal, with a metallic laugh.

"If such an arrangement did exist," returned Jolanda, "then I give my mother credit for more cleverness than I ever dreamed she possessed. Too bad she isn't here now to protect her daughter from a fiend of a husband."

"Husband?" laughed Royal, pocketing the bit of paper.

"Please go away," Jolanda pleaded. "You're mad."

"If I'm mad, then you're incorrigible!" exclaimed Royal. "You demand luxuries, you satiate yourself with drinks and drugs, you spurn maternity . . . you have eliminated the fundamental principle of marriage from our troth. . . ."

"You talk to me as if I were a criminal," Jolanda broke in.

"Any woman who resists the laws of sanctified

marriage," announced Royal dramatically, "is guilty of inhumanity . . . is capable of a crime."

"What about the other girl?" asked Jolanda maliciously. "You love her, you say, then why don't you go to her? I shan't mind."

"I've spared you now two long years," Royal went on madly. "Are you so deadened to all that is just and holy that you can lend truth to your eternal excuses? The elimination of the child ends in the elimination of marriage itself. For the last time, I ask . . . do you deny me the husband's authority?"

"You wouldn't dare," cried Jolanda. "Never will I submit to your authority. You haven't the right to expect it of me after what you told me the day before we were married. I would kill myself first. I hate you . . . I hate you!"

She was in mortal terror. Long had she feared this hour.

The song of the drunken soldier died upon Royal's lips. Months of indulgence in drugs had stripped Jolanda of the subtleness of her sex. All his illusions, optimism, and sentiment, were spent.

He crept from the room.

CHAPTER XXII

HAVING no children of her own, Mrs. Rossiter Jones wanted to mother the whole world. She always had a tender spot in her heart for Royal, and now that whispers of his marital unhappiness had reached her ears, she put herself out to be nice to him, when she chanced upon him at the St. Regis during the luncheon hour. Royal was battling with an emotional disturbance that made him unfit for work after the night's encounter. Mrs. Jones was sure the healing power of music would work wonders with haggard looks and wrinkled brow, so she transported him to Symphony Hall.

Up to now, Royal had not been cognizant of Jenny's rise and success in the musical world. Like most young men he always skipped the social and musical columns in the newspapers, confining himself to the news, traction and realty intelligence, and sports. The average young man, in things pertinent to music, is very much like Voltaire, who, when asked if he liked music, replied: "It does not precisely annoy me."

Royal did not even glance at the programme, which an usher had thrust in his hand as he entered the box with Mrs. Jones. Nothing so far had diverted his thoughts from the tragic incidents of the night. He would live over each moment until the sweat would gather on his brow. The wound on his wrist, bandaged and concealed by his cuff, irritated him. He was not so sure now that he had done the right thing in not notifying the police of the attempted burglary and subsequent encounter, but he feared the limelight of publicity, just at the time when he needed the cover of darkness to work out his destiny.

Suddenly the house went dark . . . a roar of applause . . . and there stood Jenny, revealed in all her loveliness. The house was stilled. Jenny tucked the violin under her chin. The elevation of a graceful arm, a quick side glance at the pianist, and she disclosed anew, to the assembly, her remarkable accomplishment upon the instrument.

Royal sat as one transfixed, as if the effluence of the world's venom had been overcome by the working of some potent incense, that seemed to rise from the center of the stage. He had no part with Jenny now; no longer was he an object of special privilege. All this she had done herself; her artistic taste, her vitality of dreams, had elevated her to a high station. The spectre of their love seemed to rise between them, with mocking

laughter, like the derisive spook which haunts the dissection table.

During the first intermission, Gene dropped into the box, and very cleverly concealed his surprise at the sight of Royal, who also masked his feelings. Immediately Gene began to place a stumbling block in the path of Royal's intention to meet Jenny after the concert, although Royal had not verbally expressed the wish; casually he was saying a whole lot with his eyes.

"Jenny is worn out after a concert," said Gene, who seemed to be talking to the ceiling; "and as her manager,"—his breast stuck out like a pouter pigeon's—"I see to it that she is never disturbed."

Mrs. Jones broke the tension pleasantly. "Her tone is really remarkable to-day. By the way, Professor, how many concerts has she in her repertoire?"

"Twelve," replied Gene; adding: "Of course some she plays oftener than others. I tell her she is pretty young to be playing Beethoven and Brahms concertos."

"How delightfully she plays the adagio of 'The Little Red Lark,' " spoke Mrs. Jones. "Her emotions in the nature and love themes are truly wonderful. You know, I have always thought that our Jenny must have had a very interesting love experience, for she goes at such themes with so much evident devotion, with such sweep and fire."

"Could not such themes be revealed to a genius without the actual experience?" interrogated Gene, still looking at the ceiling.

"Oh, but she has such capabilities of tenderness," resumed Mrs. Jones. "I have often wondered, too, if she has not also suffered, perhaps some disappointment in love, for she has such deep, searching qualities. I'm an old woman, and yet she thrills me with her harmonic interpretation of that most wonderful thing in life . . . love."

"Well, maybe she did have some silly love affair," Gene admitted, glancing at Royal, who also seemed to have found something of interest on the ceiling.

Mrs. Jones went on mercilessly. "Love affairs are never silly, Professor. Jenny plainly shows that she has the most profound adoration for somebody."

In spite of Gene, Fate and Mrs. Jones saw that Jenny and Royal met after the concert. Jenny steeled her heart, and never by a look or word did she betray the tumult that was going on inside of her.

She was sitting on a lounge in the little room back of the stage when Royal entered. She wore a simple frock of brown charmeuse, soft and clinging, with a touch of white at the throat, like the white down under the fledgling's wings. She rose, and extended her hand in a most ordinary and for-

mal manner. Mrs. Jones was charmed to learn that they had known each other at Tranquility, which was only natural, seeing that Royal's step-father had put the place on the map. And she put her foot into it right off by saying to Royal, in a playful manner: "Stupid boy! You might have played the fairy prince. Surely you recognized the girl's genius?"

Thought Royal: "Perhaps when I am old and tottering, I shall be able to appreciate a Wienian-ski polonaise more than the fingers that play upon the fiddle strings." What he said aloud was this: "It is my deep regret that I had no hand in the making of a great artist."

"Regret comes to all of us in time," consoled Mrs. Jones. "The absence of it is the condition of being young."

The moment they stood alone, detached from the rest of the party, Royal said to Jenny: "You've made wonderful progress since last we met . . . Miss Riano. Your violin has carried you far beyond the lesser things of life."

"Please call me 'Jenny'; and say 'fiddle' when you speak of my violin," Jenny corrected Royal icily. "I hope I don't impress you as 'Miss Riano and her violin.'"

"My greatest regret is that I had no hand in this . . . your success." Royal sighed heavily; it escaped him before he could help himself.

"That's twice you've said that," asserted

Jenny. "Of course, you know that I am obligated to Mrs. Jones for the measure of success I have achieved. It is my ambition to constantly grow . . . to give my best to the public." She might have been talking to a reporter, so cold and formal were her remarks.

"My idea of a woman's happiness," said Royal, "is something to take care of."

"The adjustment to economics is unavoidable under modern conditions." Jenny hadn't the slightest idea what she was talking about, for she was simply repeating one of Anne's pet phrases. Then she got her bearings. "I am amply provided for. My happiness lies in my fiddle. Perhaps you might like to know how I got my start." Then, before Royal could reply—they were seated on the lounge now—she told him how she had evolved from artificial flower making to Turkeltaub's picture palaces, bridging the time briefly up to the fateful afternoon at the charity bazaar.

"Oh, I remember now!" declared Royal; "you were the pierrot. If I had only known!"

Jenny was warming up to the situation in spite of herself, when she meant to be cold and distant. "If I remember correctly," she went on, "it was the very day your engagement was announced. You must have been terribly bored at my playing, for you left in the midst of it."

"I'm so sorry, but I haven't been myself since our last separation." He moved a little closer to

Jenny. "You don't know what I've suffered."

"And I . . . I have suffered, too."

"Is it possible that you still care? . . ." Royal turned his eager, inquiring eyes upon her.

Thereupon Jenny made an awkward move to retreat from the avowal into which she had been drawn. "At any rate," she said, "that day marked the beginning of my career . . . of my happiness." She arose, to greet Mrs. Jones. "And here comes my fairy godmother, who made it all possible."

Mrs. Jones rushed up with good news for Jenny. She had just talked with Lady Diana Milbank, who had been so charmed with Jenny's playing that she wanted her to appear at the dinner she was to give the next week, in honor of the Duke and Duchess of Brookleigh, who were coming on from Canada for a visit.

"It's remarkable how the nicest sort of people take to our little Jenny Wren." Mrs. Jones was addressing Royal. As she spoke, Jenny rose and glided over to where Gene stood, bending over a chair, assorting and rolling up her music.

"Oh, Jiggsie," cried Jenny in a subdued voice, clutching him by the arm, "did you ever see such a change in anyone? Something terrible has happened. There's a mad, hunted look in Royal's eyes. His hands are never still. The least sound seems to make him jump. His wrist is bandaged.

I saw a blood stain on his cuff. Oh, I'm so alarmed about him. . . ."

" . . . Tell me, what is Heavenly Hill?" Mrs. Jones was asking Royal.

"An ordinary hill to most people," replied Royal, glad of the chance to talk about Jenny, "thickly timbered and tangled with brush and flowers. But to one of . . . Miss Riano's creativeness, a hill of mystery, inhabited by birds, fairies, elves and wood nymphs. It was her daily retreat when a young girl, for she had a veritable lodge in the trees. Her old Granny, the late Nancy Beedle, was a rag carpet weaver, and Miss Riano had to toil early and late at the loom."

"How intensely interesting," pronounced Mrs. Jones.

"Undoubtedly Miss Riano inherits her dreamy nature from her father, who was a Portuguese fisherman," Royal went on, the conversation acting as a sort of safety-valve for his pent-up feelings; "and her virtue and vitality from her mother, who was a New Englander. Her Granny claimed to be a direct descendant of Oliver Cromwell."

"A wonderful man in his day," remarked Mrs. Jones. "How I should have loved to have met him socially."

"When her Granny died," Royal continued, "Miss Riano was thrown upon her own resources, for the old lady left everything to the church. The

only legacy she left her grandchild was a flock of geese, and the end of the rainbow."

Jenny came up in time to hear Royal's closing remark. She smiled. "Don't believe everything you hear, Mrs. Jones," she cautioned. "You know how people with vivid imaginations get things twisted sometimes. The portraits of my ugly ancestors I still possess, the geese have all been gobbled up in roasts and pies. As for the end of the rainbow . . . have I not found it in you?"

"I was afraid you were going to say I was the goose that laid the golden egg," observed Mrs. Jones, with a hearty laugh.

It was time to go now, and the Professor's little moves of strategy to keep Jenny and Royal apart would have been amusing if there had not been quite so much seriousness attached to their meeting and adieu. Gene had made up this little speech to deliver to Royal on parting: "I trust you will not at any time remind Jenny of the unhappy incident in your lives, as she has forgotten all about it. As her manager, I feel justified in speaking to you plainly and to the point. I'm sure you would shrink from any word or action that would divert her mind from her chosen profession, in the pursuit of which she is divinely happy."

But Gene lost the opportunity to have it out with Royal. When he looked around, after the

party had broken up, Royal was just disappearing through the exit which led to Forty-second Street. Jenny also was laboring under the impression that Royal had gone for good, or she never would have retraced her steps to the little ante-room back of the stage, to look for her veil. She came upon Royal quite unexpectedly.

It seems he had found the far exit barred, and had returned to the room, there to give vent to his feelings. When Jenny first saw him, he was sitting on the lounge, in the semi-gloom, for the wall lights had been extinguished, his face buried in his hands, his body shaken with emotion. To Jenny he seemed like a reed, bruised and shaken by the storm. All her heart went out to him.

She stood beside him. He must have been conscious of her presence, although he did not raise his head. Her hand touched his hair in a slight caress. "I'm so sorry," fell like a benediction from her trembling lips.

But it did not fall so on Royal's ears. All he knew, or cared to know, was that it was Jenny's voice; that her fragrance enveloped him, that her hand had touched him lightly, gently. After the buffeting of the world, stripped of his illusions, dead in hope, her voice, her touch, was like an intoxicant; it warmed, it maddened him. Crazy with the want of her, drunk with the sight of her, he suddenly rose, and seized her . . . held her in his arms. Jenny struggled, but he would not re-

lease her. With his lips pressed to hers, he held her in a wild, mad embrace. Then he released her. Jenny stumbled backwards, her face as white as death.

"Now, you've spoiled everything," she cried. She stood tremulously helpless, like the flower, with its petals torn and wind-whipped by the tempest. Then she took a step towards the door.

"Don't leave me!" exclaimed Royal. "For God's sake, don't send me away from you. I love you . . . I want you . . . my Jenny!"

"I hate you for this," avowed Jenny, with grim, quivering lips. "I never want to see you again. . . ."

She fled, through the darkened auditorium, to the main entrance.

Somehow Gene did not mention Royal's name on the way home, for which Jenny was thankful.

"I was delighted to hear you play the Chopin nocturne without scratching," remarked Gene, as Angelo took the corner at Washington Square gracefully. "Lady Diana was greatly impressed with your performance. She wishes you to include a Chausson poem and a Vitali chaconne in your programme at her house on the sixth."

Just to prove to herself that she could diverge from the thoughts that were scorching her brain, Jenny blandly observed: "Clementina makes the best orange tarts. I hope she will have some for dinner."

And yet her mind was alive with flame, a condition with which orange tarts had little in common. She had been held in Royal's embrace . . . the thrill of his lips on hers. She had touched the burning bush. But she continued to repeat to herself: "I hate him. I never want to see him again. . . ."

CHAPTER XXIII

LADY DI, as she was known to her intimate friends, belonged to the ultra smart. Widowed by the war, she had returned to her native heath, with an eligible son, Cecil. Now Cecil had everything that a young man should possess except brains. His world was divided into two parts: blithering idiots and jolly good sports. He was a very clever dancer, and much sought after by the women who like doll men. The climbers laid traps for him, for once established in his favor, there remained a possibility of meeting his haughty mother, who had drawn a fine tooth comb through the ranks of society, with the result that her dinner parties, of which she was giving a series, had established a precedent.

Cecil really has no business in this story. He got into it by going to a *thé dansant* at Polly Primrose's tea shop, located in the Forties; a modest brownstone house, with a big green parrot perched over the entrance door. It was quite the fad to go to Polly's for tea and dancing, and those in the

know found it a very pleasant place for an evening of roulette. Everything was conducted on the most circumspect order, and to the casual patron, or observer, it was a smart, jolly little place. As a matter of fact, it was a seething pothole of vice.

In addition to her tearoom, Polly taught dancing. Many of her pupils were daughters of the terribly rich and the terribly fashionable. She also acted as chaperone at the dinner dances at one of the big hotels. The men about town, the roué, the rake, thought her a jolly fine sport. She could always be depended upon to produce a pretty girl. Her supply seemed unlimited. At the dances, she seemed to give her entire attention to making introductions; always formal in her manners, always chic in her dress.

For the entertainment of the middle-aged women and the older girls, she had equipped her tea shop with a group of young men, smart dressers, good dancers, all of them social blackguards.

In two years, Polly had salted away many thousands. Roulette paid handsomely, and there was a large margin of profit in the purveying of drugs. Her largest income, and it was always dependable, was the hush money which she exacted from the older men and women for not divulging discreditable secrets.

Polly pounced on Cecil the first afternoon he drifted into the tea shop, for he looked like ready

money. But Cecil was so constituted mentally that he never, like the cross-eyed woodchopper, struck where he looked. To Polly's astonishment he asked for an introduction to Carrie Cruikshank. Carrie was among the innocent patrons of the shop; she liked to dance, she saw no harm in an occasional flirtation, and she spent her money liberally in harmless things.

"You know, you're an awfully good sort," said Cecil, after his first dance with Carrie.

"You Englishmen are such flatterers," responded Carrie, blowing and puffing. "Don't I know? Didn't I spend a week in London? Oh, I think those meat-eaters at the Tower are just grand. And Westminster Abbey! Do you know what I did there? I sat on Henry's tomb and ate a bag of peanuts. He was a horrid king anyway; he ought to be sat on."

Cecil haw-hawed. "I like you Americans," he drawled. "You're so spontaneous."

"Spontaneous combustion, you mean," returned Carrie flippantly. "That's what'll happen to me if that waiter doesn't hurry up with a long drink. Oh, I'm so hot!" She sank down heavily on a chair. "Say, I've got the loveliest sister. You must meet her. Maybe you'd like to call. We have a wonderful house on the avenue, but it's so lonesome there—oh, so lonesome!"

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Cecil; adding, in a serious tone: "I say, you're such a clever sort,

mumsey ought to invite you to one of her dinners. They're frightful bores. We need someone to liven things up a bit."

"And who, pray, is 'mumsey?'" asked Carrie, playfully fishing the cherry out of Cecil's cocktail.

"I beg your pardon," said Cecil. "Perhaps you didn't catch my name. I'm Cecil Milbank."

"Lady Diana's son?" gasped Carrie. Then: "Oh, I'm ruined forever."

"Well, I like that," Cecil protested.

"Oh, but I don't mean what you mean," resumed Carrie. "You see, my sister hasn't the slightest inkling that I come to Polly's. If she did, she would scalp me. Besides, she's set her heart on attending one of your mother's dinner parties. She would move heaven and earth to get an invite. Now, I've spoiled her chances . . . discredited the whole family."

"Nonsense," declared Cecil in a cheery tone. "I have no doubt mumsey has overlooked your mother. If your sister is anything like you, she must be a jolly good sport. I like you immensely, and I'm sure mumsey would like you. It's really too late for a formal invitation, but some of my friends are coming in after dinner, for the music, and I insist that you come and bring your sister. Do come. It'll be perfectly all right."

So this will explain how Sophia, the indefatigable, and her sister, Carrie, dropped in at Lady

Di's house, in Park Avenue, where the very pick of the town had been invited to meet the Duke and Duchess of Brookleigh.

The dinner that preceded the musicale and dance was formal. Lady Di was formal. Formality will be the last instinct to yield in her. No doubt her deathbed scene will be most formal, if she can so arrange it.

There were over a hundred guests at dinner, a most brilliant assembly, and about two hundred additional guests had been invited for the music and dancing, including a small group of Cecil's friends, most of whom were beneath his mother's contempt; but she suffered their presence for the great love that she bore her son. They were all men, and, strange to relate, of the intellectual sort. While the guests were seating themselves in the ballroom, after dinner, Cecil took occasion to cover up the social shortcomings of his friends. "They are very intellectual, mother," he explained; "and awfully jolly when one knows them."

"My dear," said Lady Di, "I'm afraid you have yet to learn the difference between the intellectual and the fashionable. There is no greater bore in the world than men of intellectual accomplishment. I simply will not ask them to my dinners. So please respect my wishes, and never again ask them to my house."

The musical programme was on when Sophia and Carrie put in their appearance. Sophia was

as gorgeous and as proud as a peacock. Cecil met them at the entrance to the ballroom, and escorted them down the improvised aisle, well to the front. Lady Di watched their entrance from the far side of the ballroom with suppressed feelings; the only visible sign of her agitation was the more rapid movement of her great feathered fan. She had never allowed Cecil the privilege of inviting women. He had overstepped the bounds. She was furious at him.

"I dare say these two persons are also of intellectual achievement," Lady Di protested under her breath, the moment Cecil came within hearing. This was just after the first number, an allegro appassionato, by a lady harpist.

"They're perfectly all right, mumsey," vouched Cecil. "I met the younger one, the blonde, this afternoon at Polly's."

"At Polly's?"

"Yes, mumsey; an awfully decent tea and dancing place. The older one, the very fat one,—they are sisters, you know, is terribly rich, and has a big house on Fifth Avenue. You'll like them. They both seem to be a ripping good sort."

There were daggers and dirks in Lady Di's eyes. "You've made a terrible mess of things. I shall have to ask them to leave."

Cecil, after that, made a graceful getaway, for he knew from experience that it would be useless

to combat his mother's determination once she set her mind to do a thing.

All eyes were now centered on Sophia. Nobody seemed to care a picayune whether the operatic tenor, who followed the harpist on the programme, possessed tones ripe or unripe. The embarrassment of the hostess was highly apparent to everyone. There were certain things peculiar to Sophia about which there could be no dispute. She had gained entrance to Lady Di's house by strategy. Heretofore, her little tricks to gain a foothold had been contemptuously ignored. It was high time now for the complete subjugation of this push-and-go person. Thus a silent current of understanding seemed to permeate the ballroom. Invisible sparks of protest emanated from every woman present, and if Lady Di had been a wireless receiving station, she could not have received more encouraging messages, to rid the place of such social rubbish.

The silent concentration of thought often works more havoc than the open expression of opinion. Sophia was at her wit's end, to know just what to do, for she realized that she had pushed her way forward once too often. She had the immediate apprehension, by sense, of impending disaster. She glanced around for Cecil—Carrie's friend, but he had disappeared. Yet she maintained a certain equanimity until Jenny appeared; then her nerve gave way.

Jenny closed the programme with brilliant achievement. She espied Sophia and Carrie the moment she stepped on to the dais, and their presence might have caused her some uneasiness, if she had not had the strength of mind to override her feelings. She gloried in that brief moment of triumph. Had she not risen rejuvenescent from the ashes of her unhappiness? She had outwitted the tragic forces.

Sophia, meantime, was viewing Jenny with varying emotions. The repellent thoughts and looks of the assembly had not troubled Carrie. Nothing, it seemed, could ever dampen her social adulation. But dark visions were blinding Sophia's vision. Standing out distinct in her mental range was the picture of a young girl, in a cotton frock, pleading for her happiness.

In the end, the assembly fairly overwhelmed Jenny with tribute. And while the ballroom was being cleared for dancing, Lady Di led Jenny around by the hand, like a shy debutante, presenting her to everybody worth knowing.

Sophia and Carrie stood apart in complete social ostracism, like banished women of ancient Greece. The realization that Jenny had triumphed where she had failed, settled like coals of fire upon poor Sophia's head. She stood awaiting the crack of her social doom.

After all, there was nothing sensational in Lady Di's method of ridding the place of the unwel-

come guests, much to everyone's disappointment. Lady Di was too much of a social diplomat to create a scene. What really happened was this:

Sophia dropped her fan quite by accident, but the immediate nearness of Lady Di's chief butler, a sort of major domo, when the fan fell to the floor, was not accidental, for Lady Di had instructed her servant to stand by until opportunity presented itself for the delivery of her ultimatum. So, in handing back the fan, the butler simply repeated, in a low voice, milady's command.

But Lady Di could not control the deportment of her guests. As Sophia, with Carrie at her heels, ran the social gauntlet to the door, all conversation ceased . . . the ballroom was suddenly stilled.

The thought that scourged Sophia was that Jenny had witnessed her social annihilation.

. . . On with the dance!

CHAPTER XXIV

THE moral effect of Royal's advent into the affairs of the Shuttles system had been immediate, just as his stepfather had planned it should be; but Aaron had not counted on his stepson's marked capacity for winning men to his ideas, any more than he had a prescience of the young man's thoroughness in brushing aside all appearance of obstacle and plunging into the heart of things.

The name, Shuttles, to the world, stood for traction companies and realty development. For years Aaron had had a monopoly on the traction lines in the metropolitan zone, outside of the greater city, utilizing and manipulating the assets of the same for the purpose of furthering realty schemes and speculative enterprises in which he was interested. As a utility, the traction lines were supposed to serve the masses, the poor man, who were driven by low wages and the high cost of living to the suburbs. Aaron's great speculative lure was "own your own home," at so much

down and so much a week. By the Shuttles system, it would appear, on the face of things, that the downtrodden working man could in time own a beautiful suburban home at a dollar down, a dollar a week. In time he had built up vast communities along his suburban lines, but no man as yet owned his own home; and no man could reach his home unless he patronized the Shuttles traction system, or walked.

When the great exodus of the poor to the suburbs began, attracted by Aaron's realty developments, the net revenue from the transportation alone was enormous; but the service remained the same, in spite of the increasing population in the vast tracts which the street railways tapped. The poorest imaginable equipment was in operation; the cars were old and unsanitary, and the running schedule undependable. During the morning and evening rush hours, when the poor man was hurrying to or from his work, the cars were packed, jammed; and always cold in winter, and dirty and smelly in summer. Frequent strikes would often tie up the entire system, and transportation would be paralyzed for days. Such conditions were seemingly without redress. And throughout the entire intricate system of surface cars there were no free transfer points; on two lines an exchange ticket could be had for eight cents.

Aaron's interwoven interests, both in and outside of the greater city, were enormous; and his

conception of these mushroom corporations, that they and their assets were practically his property, subject to use as he might see fit, although he followed the usual routine in most instances by having his officials duly appointed. He had confidential men doing all the work of transferring securities and writing checks to stand off other checks, without knowledge of their fellow directors, or the corporation officials. As President of the entire Shuttles business, Aaron had great power, and very often even the directors did not know what he was doing.

Royal had taken hold of the associate manager-ship with never-ceasing drive and energy. Officially, the position stood for naught; that is, when he went into it, but with indomitable initiative and pluck, he had forged himself forward. Within a year the directors had to acknowledge that Aaron had only one rival in the intimate knowledge of the traction and realty business, and that rival was his stepson.

By this time, the financial world entertained a wholesome regard for Royal's sound business sense and adroitness. The manner in which he improved the service of the suburban street railways, after working in turn as a conductor and motorman, and mingling with the employees in overalls and shirtsleeves, caught the public's fancy, and proved infectious to the directors, at the same time thrilling the stockholders.

During the second year, however, the system felt the squeeze of the labor strikes, wage demands, and the slump in the real estate market, and on account of this, the conditions of improvement brought about by Royal, did not produce real prosperity for the allied interests of the system, although the gold seemed to continue to pile up for Aaron. With all evidence of economies and increased efficiency, the year covered one of the most disastrous periods in the history of the firm. There was an immense shrinkage; a decrease for the year of over a million dollars. Royal met the situation as bravely as possible. His stepfather put the blame on the new and greater utilities, the bridges and subways and the war, for pinching the suburban railways, thus causing the shrinkage in the operating revenue.

Through it all, Royal never lost sight of that sinister motive which colored his ambitions. Finally, he was enabled to clinch the fact that funds were being improperly diverted from the system's treasury. And he set about in his own way to clear up the mysteries that had lain hidden in the books for so many years. For weeks—months, he had experts laboring secretly on the records. At last, the indubitable certainty was his, proof conclusive of the flagrant state of irregularities existing in his stepfather's financial operations, in defiance of law and disregard for common honesty. The report of the experts was made on the

day following his meeting with Jenny at Symphony Hall.

The crisis in his business and marital affairs did not affect him quite so much as his last scene with Jenny, which had cast him into the black of despair. Perhaps if she had known the truth, the horrible truth, she would not have been so hard on him. Had his madness for one brief moment put a stop to everything . . . forever?

What was to become of Jolanda? In the crux of his feelings, even in revulsion, he pitied her. Long addicted to drugs, she was becoming dangerous to herself and to society, and he could no longer hold her responsible for irrational conduct. Why not place her under institutional care and control? Tranquility Towers was no longer a summer hostelry, but a fashionable sanitarium—fashionable, in that it was patronized by those of wealth and position who were suffering from physical and mental impairment. He might send her there.

Tranquility Towers had passed out of Aaron's hands through foreclosure proceedings,—that was six months ago; and a great deal more would pass from under his control if the motives in his stepson's mind reached fruition. All in all, Aaron's future was filled with disquieting possibilities.

Events of the last day or so had predisposed in the lowering and derangement of Royal's reasoning centers. But he was sane enough to regard

himself as irresponsible, and so kept away from Jolanda, staying at the Midtown Club; he also studiously avoided meeting his mother, since the discovery of the social pact, for fear he could not restrain himself. Fortunately Aaron was out of town for a few days. Everything to Royal now was a source of injustice, of wrongs, and in his hand, a weapon, with which he could strike back at the offending sources.

At a meeting of the directors that very afternoon, Royal appeared quite unexpectedly, and produced the large volume of evidence against his stepfather, showing that entries on the books had been falsified, erased and changed, and a new set of books prepared with manufactured entries. The directors were shocked . . . horrified. They had placed unlimited faith and confidence in Aaron.

"This will cause a great sensation if it ever gets out," declared one of the directors.

"But it must never get out," protested another. "We must hush it up. Besides, it would be unnatural for this young man to present a matter to the criminal authorities which directly concerns his own kin. We couldn't ask it of him, much less expect such action on his part. After all, they may not be such glaring irregularities."

"Let the young man speak for himself," suggested a third director.

Royal faced the directors. When he spoke his

voice was loud and clear. "We want light, not darkness," he said. "We want the truth shouted, not silence. It will be far better to have one very loud explosion than to have illegitimate influences and intrigue, sapping the foundations of an institution already tottering, even if it threatens the good name of everyone connected with the Shuttles system, no matter who he may be, or what office he may fill."

"Oh, but we are innocent of any irregular transactions!" came in a chorus of voices.

"After running down the matter in all its ramifications," stated Royal, "I am glad to state, gentlemen, that none of you would be obliged to appear before the Federal grand jury, in the consideration of alleged criminal violation of the Sherman law. But"—and his eyes shone with unwonted brightness, "the presentation of the facts as they stand, to the grand jury at the opening of the January term—to-morrow, would result in three indictments at least against the President of this corporation, and the controlling power in dozens of other subsidiary companies. Let me tell you that Aaron Shuttles is corrupt. He has violated every principle of business decency, falsifying corporate accounts, declaring unearned dividends,—his whole life a campaign of falsification. His offence is of the most flagrant sort, because he has filched from the poor man."

"A matter of tragic regret," spoke the first di-

rector. "Too bad he's not here to speak for himself."

"He is expected back to-morrow afternoon," Royal stated. "Let us hope he faces the charges as courageously as he defrauded the poor homeseekers out of their money, since title to their lots, at Sunnybrook Gardens, I understand, cannot be passed to them unencumbered. The poor creatures who bought on the installment plan have lost out altogether."

The directors crowded around Royal after the meeting, congratulating him on the stand he had taken, of putting business integrity before obligation to kin, in his desire to protect the stockholders and the poor homeseekers. It was noble, heroic of him, and if the worst came to the worst, a new company could be organized with sufficient capital to meet the pressing obligations. No doubt the minority stockholders would assent to the plan and subscribe for bonds. No doubt he felt keenly the duty imposed upon him, and they (the directors) would look to him now for a sweeping clean-up, and the complete eradication of an unscrupulous financier.

Royal looked upon these staid old men of the business world with pity. They were almost as pathetic to him as the poor man who had sunk his all in a building lot at Sunnybrook Gardens. Their idol in the Big Business had fallen. Yet would the directors have entertained such respectful regard for him if they had known the real

cause of his motive to crush this Captain of Industry?

The night was tense, electric, in the preparation for the criminal prosecution that was to follow Aaron's return to town. When Royal tumbled into bed at the Midtown Club, daylight was breaking.

Three hours of troubled sleep did not seem to dissipate the excess of spirits and energy with which he took matters in hand. Nothing seemed to stand in the way of his magnificent scheme to pay the tragic forces back to the utmost. It was strange how unexpected events lent the element of the incomprehensible. For, somehow, the report of the directors' meeting had leaked out, and it had met the ears of those who have no scruples, no hesitation, in forcing the hand of the law. Before noon, Aaron was sued by the State Inter-urban Company for a million and over, and his big house in Fifth Avenue attached. This case grew out of some stock juggling, in which Aaron had acted under a "secret trust," and had failed to give an accounting; falsely and fraudulently, as the complaint stated, claiming the sum of a million and over as his property.

Once Aaron Shuttles had stood well nigh impregnable in his financial fortress, enjoying the fruits of his illegitimate victories. Now he was a candle. Poof! With one breath, Royal could extinguish him as a tallow flame.

Aaron faced the directors. The sweat stood in

beads on his forehead. He was blanched, ugly in his uncouthness, when stripped of his business bravado. As in a horrible dream, with all the sinister forces of his corrupt business methods arrayed against him, he heard the edict of his financial condemnation:

"... The Federal Department has been conducting an examination of the Shuttles system, and, because of discovered conditions, and also certain irregular transactions that have taken place during the time the examination has been in progress, the Federal Department has deemed it necessary to take possession, for the protection of the stockholders. . . ."

All that Aaron heard was blotted out momentarily at the realization that Royal had brought all this upon him. It struck him like a shaft of death. For there stood his stepson, giving instructions to two policemen in plain clothes for the serving of the warrant of arrest. Was there nothing to stay the hand of his irrevocable destiny? Arrested on the charge of grand larceny! Aaron stumbled forward, and sank down on the nearest chair.

At Royal's quiet solicitation the room was cleared. Turning to his stepfather, Royal said: "My advice is, to meet the issue courageously, and plead guilty."

"What have you done?" groaned Aaron, pulling himself together with a tremendous effort.

"What any person would do who had the interests of a great utility at heart," Royal replied placidly. "You certainly knew my attitude toward the present-day methods of big business when you installed me, or rather tricked me, into the berth of associate manager. I had not been here long until I discovered a flagrant state of irregularities in the financing of traction and realty companies, and the misuse of the company's funds. If I had stayed the due process of the law, of incrimination, I would have been as guilty as you." He paused. "Shall I fetch you a glass of water?"

"No," thundered Aaron. Then he laughed. It was excruciatingly funny. This slip of a boy, this dreamer, had been the means of his downfall. His laugh died on his lips. He started, arose; his face was almost purplish. With a sudden lunge, he struck out at Royal, who evaded the blow by a quick turn, thus placing the long mahogany table between himself and his irate stepfather.

"You infernal rascal," hissed Aaron between his teeth; "you with your damned queer notions about serving the interests of the public. Thank God, you're no blood kin of mine! You would rob me of my good name, disgrace me, drag me in the mud . . . me the father of the great Shuttles system. For this I fed and clothed you; for this I placed you in a high position when you weren't worth your own salt. You think to frighten me

with my arrest. You seem to forget that I'm backed by powerful interests that will crush a maggot like you. I'll not plead guilty. I'll fight to the last ditch with the best lawyers in town . . . I'll spend my last penny. . . ."

"You haven't a penny in the world," Royal broke in with a wicked laugh.

"By God," cried Aaron, "if it wasn't for your mother, I'd kill you where you stand. . . ." He paused to catch his breath. He made a clutching movement of his hand at his throat, as if choking, then sank, tremulous with violent agitation, beside the table.

At that moment, a commotion was heard outside the office door. "I will go in. I will . . ." It was Sophia's voice. The door burst open, and Sophia rushed into the room. She hurried to Aaron's side, and flung her arms, while half kneeling, around him. "It's true, then?" she gasped. "We're ruined. . . ."

"Go home, Ma," commanded Aaron brusquely. "This is no place for you."

"Home?" exclaimed Sophia, in tears. "We haven't any home. It's been detached. . . ."

"Mother doubtless means 'attached,'" put in Royal icily.

Aaron moaned, while Sophia wept. "Don't take on so, Ma," he admonished; "it annoys me. I've got my hands full with this ingrate," pointing at Royal. "He's the cause of it all. He's ruined,

disgraced us. At his instigation, I've just been served with a warrant for my arrest, charged with grand larceny. Those two men in the next room are waiting to take me to jail. If I can't raise bail, I'll have to spend the night there. . . ."

"Please," objected Royal, "don't make it any harder than it is for mother."

Sophia glared at Royal through a mist of tears. "You . . . you call me mother," she retorted, "after all you've done. You're no son of mine. Never let that name pass your lips again. I disown you." She paused; then concluded with a dry, choking sob: "Everything will be taken from us. We shall be poor. . . . Oh, my God!" She shrieked aloud.

"There's no disgrace in being poor," said Royal calmly. "At least, it will save you from yourself . . . from your mad social ambitions."

"How dare you?" protested Sophia.

Royal went on mercilessly. "People who throw away thousands on social sponsors and inveigle their sons into marriage with drug addicts, should never expect to remain happy . . . not decently happy."

"It's a lie," cried Sophia.

"Don't notice him, Ma," spoke Aaron; "he's beneath our contempt."

"I think we stand on common ground," drawled Royal.

"Have you no heart?" snarled Sophia.

"No; I have no heart," returned Royal. "I am the product of money bags." He wet his lips. "Again I say, we stand on common ground."

"What do you mean?" asked Aaron sullenly.

"Have you so soon forgotten?" Up to now, Royal's voice had been cold and calm; now it was shot with heat and passion. "To serve your ambitions you crushed a poor innocent creature to earth. You trampled me into the dust, and made of me a stepping-stone for social ascendancy. Through slander I was tricked into marriage with one whose habits were known to you, and my life made . . . a hell. Perhaps I am no son of yours, for this day I seem to have been born again. I have robbed you of your happiness as you robbed me and mine. This is the day . . . the hour of recompense. I am paying you back in full. There is no pity in my heart. I'm what you made me . . . all stone."

This was too much for Sophia. In a paroxysm of grief she hurried to Royal's side, and beseeched him madly to undo the wrong he had done.

"Royal . . . my son!" she cried. "You must save Aaron. The blow will kill him. Poverty . . . social isolation, I don't mind, but disgrace . . . never . . . never. We can never live that down. It will follow us . . . you, to the grave. It's not too late. Say it was all a mistake. Every obligation . . . every irregularity, will be met in some way. Let's stand together . . . the three of us,

and fight against this awful thing . . . dishonor!"

Royal stood adamant against his mother's entreaties. "It's too late now," he muttered.

The day and deed was done. Aaron, dazed at the overwhelming tide of circumstances that had suddenly engulfed him, was arraigned at the Police Court, where he entered the plea of not guilty to the larceny of fifty thousand dollars, in connection with the Water Front Traction Company, this being the amount of the entry that had disappeared from the company's pass book, deposited in Aaron's name in his private bank, and subsequently dissipated in Wall Street speculation. No bondsman could be found that night. Aaron sat through the long night, in a pathetic heap, on a wooden bench, in a dingy cell.

Sophia was prostrated at the house, which was destined to soon pass into other hands. Carrie roamed about, moaning like a lost soul. Thinking to console her sister, she went to Sophia's bedside. Sophia was propped up in her Louis something or other bed, sipping at a cup of hot beef broth.

"Oh, isn't it awful?" groaned Carrie; adding: "I guess it's back to Harlem for you, sister, dear."

Whereupon, Sophia, with her disengaged hand, slapped Carrie in the face, in flaming, righteous anger, for she had suddenly remembered that if it had not been for Carrie, she would never have attended Lady Di's after-dinner party, there to suffer poignant ignominy.

CHAPTER XXV

THE newspapers were filled with the downfall of Aaron Shuttles; columns were devoted to the case. For days the story kept to the front page; every hour seemed to bring forth some new developments. Four indictments had been filed against Aaron. The whole financial structure, which he had taken years to build, toppled like a house of cards.

There was a feeble effort on the part of the directors and the minority stockholders to reorganize the traction system, but it came to naught. One after another the mortgages were foreclosed on the realty developments. Hundreds—thousands, of men and women lost their savings of years. And it would take a year at least to run down everything, so great were the ramifications of this juggling financier.

Royal went down in the crash. On the day his stepfather was sentenced to serve two years in prison, everything that he had pledged in the effort to rehabilitate the company, was lost. His home was gone; he had practically nothing to live on. Jolanda's creditors were barking at his heels,

for she had continued to buy foolishly and extravagantly even in the face of calamity. To eke out the winter, Royal had to take a small, furnished flat in the West Fifties.

Sophia, in an unpretentious boarding house, had little to remind her of her days of grandeur, except a Chinese porcelain dog and a bowl of gold-fish. She was wholly dependent on Royal now, who made her as comfortable as his funds would allow. Carrie had gone to work, as a demonstrator of face bleaching powder, in a department store.

Meantime, Jenny's brain was reeling over what she considered, what Gene considered, what all her friends and admirers considered to be the apex of her brief musical career. She had been engaged to appear at the coming Sunday night concert, the last of the season's series, at the Metropolitan Opera House. Ten of the greatest American artists in their respective fields were to bring the concert season to a glorious finish. For days the town had been emblazoned with posters, announcing the grand finale. The house was already sold out. The affair promised to attract the most brilliant assembly of the season.

Jenny's engagement to appear was wholly unexpected, and it came about in this way: Among the artists advertised was the great Tenneys. But something had gone wrong at the last moment between the management and the renowned violinist, who had an atrabilious temperament. The

result: Tenneys was dropped from the programme, and Miss Jenny Wren substituted. Mind you, by this time, the bills were pasted, and the programmes printed, all bearing the name of the famed Tenneys.

Two days before the concert, the public was amazed to see Miss Jenny Wren's name substituted on the bill boards, in place of Tenneys'. There it was, in bold, black letters, pasted smack, daub, right on the top of Tenney's name, forever obliterating it. Even the programmes had to be changed, which was accomplished by the insertion of a narrow strip of paper; another instance, in which Jenny's name concealed that of Tenneys'.

Naturally the change was noted in the newspapers, both in the advertisements and the reading notices. It took the combined labor of a dozen girls, working at top speed, to paste the slips into the programmes, so that delivery could be made at the time specified. And all of the musical editors were forced to the exigency of holding up the great presses, and the engravers worked overtime, so that Jenny's name, and Jenny's photograph, could be inserted in the musical news of the Sunday supplements, which are made up a day in advance.

The fact was blazed on every side, at the elevated railway and subway stations, dimming the lustre of advertised breakfast foods and chewing gum.

. . . Jenny's hour had struck.

CHAPTER XXVI

At nine o'clock in the evening, Polly's tea-shop was closed as tight as a drum; not a light, not a sound. Even pretty Polly, the bird perched over the front door, seemed to be asleep. Oh, the tales that Polly, the bird, could tell if it was not wood, and therefore dumb!

For Polly, the person, had fitted up a flower shop next door as a blind, through which the men and women who had plenty of time and money to squander could gain entrance to the tea-shop without attracting attention; there is nothing unusual in flower shops keeping open until eleven at least.

On this particular evening three young men, all wearing evening dress and silk hats, and tortoise shell spectacles, evidently a trio of gilded college youth, entered the flower shop. Then, a few minutes later, a young woman, heavily veiled, stole quietly in.

As a drug addict, Jolanda had reached the advanced stage of misery; all of her doll-baby beauty had vanished. As she was admitted to Polly's

tea-shop through the secret door in the flower shop, she presented a pitiable sight, her face twitching, her hands never still. She had been without cocaine now for three days. Royal, it appears, in his effort to break her of the habit, had kept her under lock and key for that space of time. But she had escaped by breaking through her bedroom window and climbing down the fire-escape. Then it was only a matter of ten minutes' walk to Polly's.

Polly used the top floor of the house as her living apartments and they were gorgeously furnished. She went in largely for Oriental effects. She had her country place, a stucco villa, at Larchmont; her town car, and racer. There was nothing she lacked, it seemed; nothing, except morals and a conscience. Strangely enough, she had not been molested by the police; but this is generally the case with questionable places frequented by the rich, who are often too well bred to "squeal," as they do in the less fashionable resorts.

The hall lights were shaded in deep purple, and the halls and stairs carpeted in purple. The men servants moved about as if velvet shod. Jolanda heard no sound, as she climbed the stairs, except the subdued voices, emanating from the rooms on the second floor, where the games of chance were in progress.

It had been an off day with Polly somehow; she was irritable and cross. She had lost patience

with Jolanda, as she did with all her oldtime customers when they began to show the effects of the drug. She had cut her list down considerably, and only kept a few of her "headache powders" on hand, for those of her wealthy and cultured patrons who were willing to pay exorbitant prices for the drug.

Jolanda was in such a condition now that she would gladly barter the very clothes on her back for a pinch of the stuff. She had already disposed of most of her jewelry and trinkets in this manner.

"Really, Jo, it was very silly of you to come here to-night," said Polly, after Jolanda had revealed the state of her nerves. "You know, I've told you repeatedly that I will have nothing further to do with coke. It's too risky a business. Besides, Royal might follow you here. They say he sent his stepfather to jail. What chance would I stand?"

"He's been acting perfectly vicious of late," said Jolanda. "He's had me locked in my room since goodness knows when; but I pried the window open to-night, so here I am." Her lips twitched. "Oh, Polly, you must give me some, if only a pinch. I can't stand it . . . really . . ."

"Go right back to your husband," Polly put in abruptly; "that's my advice."

"He's not my husband," retorted Jolanda.

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me that you two have been keeping up this sham for all these months and months?"

"It's true," replied Jolanda flippantly; then: "Polly, dear, don't you see how I'm suffering. Just a wee bit, please!"

Polly went on regardless. "No wonder Royal's become vicious. Most men would have divorced you months ago. Does your mother know?"

"Of course she does. But nothing seems to interest mother now but the poor wounded soldiers in England and France. She's quite mad about nursing. Her letters are filled with the terrible suffering and frightful scenes . . ."

"See here, Jo," Jolly broke in, "can't you brace up, and act on the square with that husband of yours? You don't seem to realize it, but you're in an awfully bad way. I would like to see you get on your feet again." It was quite manifest that Polly was having a rush of conscience.

"Suppose I promised to do as you suggest, would you give me what I want? . . . just a pinch . . . Polly, please!"

"I repeat, for the last time, I haven't a thumb-nail full of coke in the house."

Jolanda's eyes blazed. "Then I shall tell the police that you're running a gambling place. It's against the law."

"You wouldn't dare!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, though?"

Thereupon Polly produced a bunch of I. O. U's from her pearl inlaid secretaire. She flourished them menacingly before Jolanda. "What about these?" she exclaimed. "Over a thousand dollars." Then: "I'll sue you . . . I'll drag you in the mud. . . ."

"I couldn't possibly be any muddier than I am now," snapped Jolanda.

"You little fool!"

Jolanda went to pieces. "Oh, what's the use of quarreling?" she moaned. "Let's be fair with each other. I want some cocaine . . . I must have it. I'm willing to pay handsomely for it. If you give me some, just a pinch, I'll square up my old debts."

"You haven't a penny," growled Polly.

"True; but I still have this." As she spoke, Jolanda drew aside the laces at her neck, displaying a superb string of pearls.

The sight of the pearls caused Polly to change her tactics completely. She leaned over Jolanda in an affectionate attitude. The pearls were in her hand now, and in her mind, this thought: "They're worth twenty thousand dollars at the lowest."

"What do you fancy they're worth?" asked Jolanda. "I hid them from Royal weeks ago, then forgot where I had put them. To-night, by chance, I found them in a vase."

"Oh, about five thousand," declared Polly.

Then: "What's your idea? Do you wish to sell them outright?"

"I have no use for them now." The tears were coursing down Jolanda's cheeks. "Oh, it's terrible to be poor and miserable. Polly, you must . . ."

"You may be miserable, but you surely are not so poor," remarked Polly in a cheery voice, for she was feeling her way. "Suppose you leave the pearls with me as a sort of security. In consideration of this, I will cancel your personal debts to me, and advance you five hundred dollars."

"And keep me supplied in cocaine," Jolanda interpolated excitedly. "Oh, Polly, you're a dear."

"I can't promise you that," Polly resumed; "but I will do my level best to serve you from time to time, until such time as you can redeem the pearls. Now that I come to think of it, I believe I have a few powders left over."

The bargain was sealed. The effect of a few sniffs on Jolanda was instantaneous. She didn't care now if she never got the pearls back; and it was plainly evident in Polly's mind that she never would. In addition to the powders, quite enough to last her for a week, she had five crisp hundred dollar bills. Jolanda glowed; she radiated. The color returned to her cheeks. After a few moments, spent in Polly's boudoir, she emerged with something of the charm and beauty of her former days. She craved excitement. Whereupon, Polly

proposed that they go downstairs and watch the games.

Every table was filled in the long room, so-called, with its red walls and red leather upholstery. Hardly a word was spoken; everybody was tense, silent. The click of ivory chips, and the whirr of the roulette wheel, were the only sounds to betoken the presence of that fickle dame, Chance. The trio of college students, distinguished by their tortoise shell spectacles, was now among the interested spectators at the roulette wheel.

The lure of chance was upon Jolanda as she wedged her way through the group around the spinning wheel. Heretofore, she had always played a losing game. Another try, and she might stand to win. The thought thrilled her. The young man who stood next to her was raking in the shekels. Just then Polly came up, and nudged her. "Have a try at it," whispered Polly. "Everybody seems to be winning to-night."

Jolanda staked her five hundred, and lost.

Then it was that the unexpected happened. Polly uttered a piercing scream, and well she might, for she suddenly found herself looking down the muzzle of a revolver, held by one of the college students, who was no other than Detective Sweeney from the Second Detective Branch. Sweeney's classmate, Detective Farrell, held the others at bay with a drawn weapon, while Detec-

tive O'Reilly flashed a signal from the front window. Instantly a dozen uniformed policemen sprang out from dark doorways. A shrill blast on a police whistle, and a waiting patrol wagon swung around the corner, half a block away. Then came the sound of the battling axes, as the law chopped its way through Polly's front door.

Royal, who had volunteered much valuable information concerning Polly's tea-shop to the police, and having been tipped off as to the hour of the raid (it was during his absence that Jolanda made her getaway), was among the first to leap across the threshold, once the door was battered in.

Polly, always the actress, had succeeded in controlling herself, even when the police burst into the long room, but at the sight of Royal, she became violent and red.

"So, it's you I have to thank for this," she cried; and she would have leapt upon him like a tigress had not the strong arm of the law intervened.

Royal came right back at Polly. "You have become dangerous and infectious to the community," he said. "Surely, a man has the right to protect his home."

Royal turned and faced the group of men and women whom the detectives had kept herded like sheep in one corner of the room. Meantime, Polly had seized the means and measure for his abase-

ment. She called Jolanda by name. Royal staggered as if stunned by a blow when he beheld Jolanda, almost in a state of collapse, emerge from the group in the corner.

"Jolanda!" he exclaimed, in anguish.

"Please take me home," pleaded Jolanda.

Once again the sublime appeal to his mercy brought Jolanda into his protecting arms. She sobbed convulsively on his shoulder; but her tears were caused more from fright than from contrition.

Polly was placed under arrest, on the charge of maintaining a gambling house. All the paraphernalia, the roulette wheel, the ivory chips and playing cards, were confiscated. The patrons were allowed to depart without further interference.

The newspapers, on the next morning, called it a "silk hat detective raid," and to Royal's despair, Jolanda's name figured prominently among those who were caught in the net. Polly somehow had managed that. It was about the only way in which she could strike back at Royal.

In the hours that followed, Royal recognized the pathetic incapacity of Jolanda as never before. Would it not be better to place her under a conservator? Her habits were sapping the vitality out of him; he had lost all ambition, even as an automobile salesman. The shadows were growing deeper about them. The black night was upon him. Finally, just at the point where twilight

and night seemed to meet, he thought of a plan.

He had for his own use a smart little roadster, which could fairly eat up the mileage. So he induced Jolanda to accompany him on a week-end trip. Spring had awakened, and the country-side was pulsing in verdure and flowers. The jaunt would do her a world of good. They would skirt the south shore of Connecticut, and return by way of the Berkshires.

Of course Royal meant to return alone. His plan was to leave Jolanda at Tranquility Towers for institutional care and control. Nothing seemed to stand in his way, for he had sounded her, and found that she did not know of the change that had taken place at The Towers. They started on the second morning after the raid.

Before leaving, Jolanda had taken a stiff sniff of the drug. But her faculties were not so benumbed that she could not realize her overt act, which had sorrowed Royal and shocked the community; and a good deal of what Polly had said to her, especially about bracing up and acting on the square with Royal, persisted in her mind. There were certain things about Royal upon which the drug could not act as an anesthetic. He had protected her through all the vicissitudes of their married life, although she had been no more to him . . . well, than the girl who stood at the roadside, a few miles back, selling bunches of wood violets. They could not go on this way forever.

Suppose he was to cast her off? Polly had intimated such a thing, and Polly ought to know. What would become of her, then? She shuddered.

Thus, little by little, the great healing out-of-doors was overcoming the effects of the cocaine, and lifting the cloud from her reasoning faculties. After hours of hard, steady driving, a sense of quietness and relief stole over her, as if she had been drugged by the wind in her face.

They stopped at Londonville for late luncheon. While Royal was tinkering with his engine, Jolanda took a sniff, really more than she intended. "Just this once," she said to herself.

The effect of the drug was plainly evident to Royal before they had proceeded very far on the last lap of their day's journey. Tranquility Towers was soon in sight. There was everything now to refresh Royal's memory; the bitter with the sweet. But he would not allow himself to dwell on thoughts of Jenny. This pitiful creature by his side, crazed by the drug, came first; it was his duty to protect and aid her. He drove at a maddening speed, as though pursued by the ugly ogres of the world, whose teeth and fangs had scarred his soul.

He slowed down in crossing the bridge that spanned the inlet, the red roofs of Tumbledown-town gleaming bright against the yellow sides of Kettle Cliff, on his left, and started up the first grade on second speed. In taking the sharp

curves, he had to give all his attention to the steering wheel. This accounts for his not noticing the big signboard, recently erected at the foot of the ascent, advertising Tranquility Towers as a high class sanitarium. But Jolanda glimpsed it, and the effect upon her was electric.

"You've tricked me!" she cried. "But I'll not go. I'll not be shut up in a sanitarium." Then she made a reckless effort to gain her feet.

Royal glanced around, bewildered, and just as he took the second curve, he espied the signboard. At the same time, he laid a restraining hand upon Jolanda, which left him with only one hand to guide the car up the winding incline.

"Jolanda . . . please!" he exhorted, as he pressed his foot down upon the accelerator with all his strength.

"It's a madhouse!" exclaimed Jolanda. "I won't go. . . . I tell you, I won't." Then she shrieked at the top of her lungs: "Help! Help!" She dug her finger nails in Royal's cheeks, and kicked at his legs.

The car, spurting forward, had gained the level of the cliff, where the road led straight to the porte cochere of the sanitarium. Several attendants, in uniform, hearing Jolanda's cries, were running towards them. Jolanda saw them coming, and, with a lunge forward, she succeeded in freeing herself from Royal's hold.

But Royal was too quick for her; he managed

to grasp her by the forearm just as she was about to fling herself from the car. At the same moment, he applied the brakes. But in the struggle with Jolanda, his foot missed the brake pedal, and came down full force on the accelerator. The car shot forward like a catapult, and left the roadway within a few feet of the stone terrace. When it struck the terrace wall, the stone and mortar gave way under the fearful impact. Fifty feet below, the sea tore at a ledge of rock and sand.

There was a grinding, crushing noise . . . shrieks of terror . . . then a sickening silence, broken only by the surge of the sea.

It was a matter of ten minutes before the attendants reached the base of the cliff. The car had been dashed into a thousand bits.

On the jagged rocks lay the body of Jolanda, stilled in awful death.

Royal's body was found about a rod away, on a shelf of sand.

CHAPTER XXVII

JENNY's first intimation of the tragedy was had through the morning papers. This was Saturday. By catching an early train out of New York for Tranquility, she would have oceans of time to return, and rest up before the great triumph.

According to the report, Royal had miraculously escaped death, and was being cared for at the sanitarium. But there was no possible chance for his recovery, the report went on to say, and a lot of other things, dug up from the newspaper morgues, where family skeletons are daily resurrected for the edification of the public.

Naturally, Gene put his foot down at once on her going. "It will upset you, my dear," he argued, "and unfit you for the concert."

"Oh, but I must see him before he dies," cried Jenny, with tears, as big as raindrops, trembling on her eyelashes. "I was cruel to him, and I should be miserable all my life if I did not seek his forgiveness.'

Then she up and told Gene of their meeting after the concert at Symphony Hall, and how she had upbraided Royal, and left him with hate on her lips.

"But it wasn't hate, Jiggsie," Jenny went on in a broken voice; "it was love, trampled and crushed, that spoke that day. I love him, better than anything, anybody, in the world, and it is cruel of you even to think that I would not go to him when he is dying. Oh, but he mustn't die! He must live, if only to conquer the things of the world that have crushed him to earth."

"Your career comes first in all things," spoke Gene determinedly.

"There's a train that will get me back to New York by midnight," Jenny resumed, regardless. "That will allow me four hours in Tranquility. Please trust me, Jiggsie. If I reach his side before he dies, if only to breathe my undying love, I shall be satisfied. Then will I play as I have never played before."

A quarter of an hour later, Angelo defied the speed laws as he drove Jenny to the station. He drove as his honored Greek ancestors must have driven their chariots, heedless of consequences, while Jenny urged him on, like a Grecian maiden of old—"On, Angelo, on!" her voice seemed to say. Angelo, glancing sideways, saw a tear-stained face, cheeks flushed with the excitement of the race, framed in a floppy hat, wreathed with

buttercups. Jenny made her train by the fraction of a minute.

Memories crowded upon her fast and furious as she stepped from the electric train at Tranquility. No one recognized the trim little figure that climbed into the waiting char-a-banc as the humble weaver of carpet rags some four years back. At the sanitarium she was ushered into a small reception room, there to await the physician in charge. At the end of five minutes, which seemed ages to Jenny, the doctor had not put in an appearance, but Carrie Cruikshank had. The meeting between Jenny and Carrie was cordial; Carrie always had a soft spot in her heart for Jenny.

"The doctors give us no hope." Carrie's lips trembled.

Jenny blanched, and caught her breath. She spoke with great effort. "His mother? . . ."

"Sister Sophia is down in bed with the mumps," Carrie returned. "Just fancy, having the mumps at fifty-two. I had the measles at thirty, though. Still, I don't think Sophia would have come anyway. She has never forgiven Royal for . . ." She paused. "Of course you know what happened?" Jenny said she did. Carrie resumed: "We are very poor now. It nearly killed Sophia to go back to boarding-house hash. She has often said to me: 'Carrie, I shall die in Harlem.' But the mumps are hardly ever fatal.

Oh, if she should die, with Aaron in prison!" She burst into tears.

Jenny's heart melted, and she put her arm around Carrie's waist—as far as it would go. They conversed in low tones, for the room and all the house seemed as still as death.

Jolanda's remains, Jenny learned from Carrie, were being looked after by the local undertaker, who was awaiting cabled instructions from Mrs. Van Mater, in Paris. Carrie had practically no funds to draw upon. "Why, it was all I could do to raise the railroad fare," she confessed.

The head physician at the sanitarium was doing what anybody would have done under the stress of tragedy. If he could not save Royal, there were others of greater skill who might, perhaps. Jenny's mind was busy as she conversed with Carrie, who showed that she lacked the initiative.

"Suppose I take hold of things," ventured Jenny. "I have funds, and will deem it a sacred privilege to do all I can in this terrible hour of suspense. Royal need never know, and if he should die . . ." she suppressed a sob . . . "we will have the satisfaction of knowing that we did all we could."

Carrie saw no reason why Jenny should not look after the little details, as she termed them; in fact, Carrie was glad to shift the responsibilities of the hour to other shoulders. So when the head physician finally appeared, Jenny spoke as

one having authority. Carrie explained to the doctor, in a dramatic aside, that Jenny was a "dear friend of the family."

Royal was terribly cut and bruised, and suffering from internal hemorrhages . . . just now he was coming from under an anesthetic . . . his death was a matter of a few hours. All this the doctor told Jenny, and more. "In his delirium, he calls for someone. The name sounds like 'Jenny.' "

After a fit of violent weeping, in a corner, all by herself, Jenny set to work to carry out her plans. Her first move was to send for two physicians of renown from New York; her second, to impress upon the doctor that no expense should be spared for the prolongation of Royal's life. "You mustn't let him die, doctor," she pleaded tearfully; "you mustn't!"

Deferring her departure that afternoon, Jenny stayed up most of the night, for Royal was sinking rapidly. She had planned to take the eight o'clock train, but when the gray dawn showed no change for the better, she despatched a message to Gene, canceling her engagement at the Metropolitan. She was not thinking of her own triumph now. Fame and the plaudits of the world meant nothing to her. Her place was near the sickroom, where the silent battle between life and death was being waged.

Before the day was very old, she had received

half a dozen telegrams from Gene, and three from Mrs. Rossiter Jones; telegraphic communications of protest, disappointment, and righteous rage. Her failure to appear as advertised would put a blot on her career forever. Her triumph was assured, and now she was ruining her one great chance. The great Tenneys had patched up his differences with the management, and was but waiting the word to appear in her stead. She was silly . . . incorrigible . . . hopeless.

At the hour when the Metropolitan Opera House was crowded from orchestra stall to family circle, while the wealth and fashion of the metropolis paid tribute to America's ten greatest artists, Jenny stood outside the sickroom door . . . hoping . . . praying.

It was midnight when the first message of hope fluttered from the room of awful silence.

. . . Royal had passed safely through the crisis; he had a fighting chance for recovery.

CHAPTER XXVIII

JENNY made a valiant effort to pick up after she returned to town, but her world became a conflict of interests, a world confused and disorganized. She could not go on with things; her mind would go back to that little room where Royal was slowly convalescing. Her vast anticipations in life had narrowed down to a single hope: the hope of Royal's recovery, so that he might gain strength to surmount the obstacles that had spelt disaster. She had no thoughts for herself now. Nor did anyone else, for that matter; at least, it seemed so to Jenny.

It was manifest to her at once that she had forfeited the inviolable claim to the good will of Mrs. Rossiter Jones. Mrs. Jones had been a surety, a sort of happy security against damage or loss; she had been the main prop of her career. Mrs. Jones was never supercilious, never dictatorial. Jenny had disappointed her terribly; in the defeat of her expectations she had undergone a complete change of feelings towards her protégée. And with the prop removed, Jenny felt her-

self sliding back, as if her little house of achievement had been built on sinking sands.

In a way, Mrs. Jones cannot be censured; nor can Gene, who was in the depths of doldrums for days. But the Professor quickly rallied to Jenny's support. Either it was too late, or he did not possess that keen capacity to devise, so necessary in the exploitation of musicians, for when he attempted to conduct affairs in his own way, he failed miserably. A month passed before Jenny re-entered the public arena. It was late in the spring; the post-Lenten season was drawing to a close. By this time, the public had been satiated with concerts. She played in Symphony Hall . . . to empty seats. When the receipts were counted, Jenny wept.

And she had good cause to weep, for she faced the summer season with no funds in sight. The cash she had managed to set aside had been gobbled up in doctor's fees. She had made all payments through Carrie, who acted as a sort of financial go-between, on the understanding that Royal was never to know where the money came from. One by one she let go of her little luxuries. First, the electric coupe and Angelo; then the baby concert grand piano; finally, the house. Clementina took things much more philosophically than Gene. She was a predestinarian. Through it all, she kept saying: "It's got to be, so what's the use of worrying?"

About the middle of May, Gene renewed the lease on the little basement that had remained vacant all this time, and the scroll saw hummed as of yore, while Clementina resumed her work mending broken dolls. The attic at No. 58 gave up enough to refurnish the place; and Jenny slept once more in the little room set aside in memory of little Mimi. The china cat, reinstated on the mantelpiece, viewed the whole situation with feline stolidity.

Jenny's pathetic state, no doubt, was the result of an emotional quandary. She was in that condition in which the soul appears to be absent from the body. She had lost the skill to achieve, just as her capabilities for carrying out her brain projects seemed to have entirely left her. There is no question but that she could have surmounted every barrier if she had put her mind to it; but she couldn't put her mind to it. She had lost faith in herself. It is very easy to make a mess of things in one's emotional life. Having ridden to the near heights of public acclaim, she seemed content now to let go of things, and drop. Her professional career had been as short-lived as a May fly.

"You're simply an ephemera, nothing more," said Gene one day, in a fit of impatience.

"Oh, please don't call me that," Jenny cried; not knowing what an ephemera was, until she

looked it up in the dictionary. After that, she didn't seem to mind.

Then something most unusual happened. While talking with Gene, a cuckoo bird, in the midst of its business of marking time with its characteristic note, fell out of the clock, right at Jenny's feet; an incident of prognostication that caused a flutter in the little household, until a letter arrived for Jenny, from Dr. Snubbins, which served to break the tensivity of this strange foretoken.

Nancy's cottage was for sale; it had proved to be an encumbrance to the church, and was to be had for a song. So the letter ran. And the idea of possessing the house, with all its memories, fell in very pleasantly with Jenny's present idea of finding a quiet corner in the world, where she could sit by the fireside and twiddle her thumbs. So she was suddenly aroused from her apathy, and her facile pitifulness gave way to a certain animation as she turned for her happiness to secondary things in life.

The sudden promise of owning her own home grew upon her by insensible graduations. Before the week was out, she had raked sufficient money together—not very much was required, to clinch the deal. Already she had enjoyed oddly exciting moments in laying out the grounds and fitting up the house for habitation, without the slightest thought of the wherewithal. She would have the front approach planted with tall poplar trees, and

terraced; she would have a rose garden with a pergola, and a bird's fountain.

On her way to Tranquility, to look after the conveyance of the property by deed, her mind was crowded with thoughts of window seats, sofa cushions, cretonne curtains, brasses, china, linen, and rugs. In some such manner does the wren plan its nest at mating time. She was going at the whole matter with a fine sense of adventure, peculiar to her nature, and she was getting a lot of irrational satisfaction out of it. In her mental process there was no thought of the inevitable loneliness, nor of the means to an end. She could only see in things the relief from an aching waste of her emotions. Then, too, in the idle expectations of better things, she was revealing much of the inherited essence of her paternal kin, who live in romanticism.

She walked from the station to the cottage without meeting anyone she knew. Dr. Snubbins had promised to keep the transfer of the property a secret transaction. He happened along just as Jenny reached the front gate, and they chattered for a few minutes like a couple of blackbirds. Then the doctor pointed to a wren's nest, built on a ledge over the front door. The mother wren did not seem to mind the intrusion, and sat serenely on her eggs while the doctor talked.

"I know that wren," said the doctor, squinting his eyes. "She built her nest there the spring

after you went away. She did not return the following season, nor the next. I came to call on her last summer, but she was not at home. I recognize her by that little white spot under the left eye." The doctor's eyesight was remarkable for one of his age. "But now she has returned, after a strange absence," he concluded, glancing at Jenny out of one corner of his eye. "So, welcome, little wren!"

Jenny smiled, a wan little smile, while she glanced over her shoulder, through the screen of trees, in the direction of Kettle Cliff, where her heart was; at least, it had been there until Royal went away. The last word she had received from his Aunt Carrie, told of his having been sent to the Adirondacks by a group of young men friends interested in his recovery.

While Jenny pottered about the cottage, the doctor roamed around the grounds, looking for bird's nests. There were bats in the chimney and holes in the roof. After nosing through the attic, she explored the extension where the old carpet loom stood. To her surprise, she found it in almost perfect order, outside of the havoc wrought by dust and cobwebs. A big fat spider, spinning a web between the beams, ran for shelter at her approach. A small strip of unfinished carpet remained in the loom, her own handiwork. The shuttle, threaded, was lying just where she had left it.

Meantime, it had started to rain; but it was a gentle, mistlike rain, descending like a benediction upon a growing world. Dr. Snubbins was standing snug and dry under a cherry tree, near the front gate, or what was left of it, awaiting the return of a thrush, which had nested in a clump of lilac bushes close by. His main idea though was to give Jenny plenty of time in which to poke about the cottage alone.

Presently a young man came down the road. He had no umbrella, and was manifestly making haste to reach shelter. Dr. Snubbins recognized him, and very politely invited him to step inside the cottage door, out of the weather. He felt sure Jenny wouldn't mind.

"Now, you just wait there till the worst is over," he admonished in a kindly voice. "Young men should take care of themselves. It's only old men who can afford to take chances. I won't budge from this spot till mamma thrush returns to her eggs, not if it rains cats and dogs."

The doctor's concluding remark was punctuated by the sudden noise of the loom. Jenny had set it going. The shuttle flew, the beams creaked and groaned, while the big fat spider, in consternation, sought refuge under a ball of faded carpet rags. And while Jenny worked, she sang a little ditty; she had a thin, almost pathetic voice.

Royal managed to enter the room unnoticed by Jenny, who sat with her back towards the door.

The shuttle flew out of her hand, and as she bent over sidewise to pick it up, she became aware of his presence. She gave a cheep of mingled alarm and surprise. Then she forgot all about herself, for the sight of Royal was enough to make her heart bleed.

He was emaciated; his face haggard and scarred. Before he could finish explaining how he had remained at The Towers a few days longer than he had intended, and how Dr. Snubbins had asked him in, out of the rain, he trembled from sheer weakness, and was forced to sit down; and there being no other seat available, he had to sit on the bench alongside of Jenny.

At first they were very formal towards each other, these two victims of strange circumstance. The world had crushed all of the beautiful things out of Royal; his visions had become a nightmare, his illusions an empty dream. He had met the ogres of the world in combat, and in vanquishing them, he himself had suffered defeat.

Jenny bore the imprint of fangs, but she had not been vanquished. What Royal had lost in his encounters with a wicked world, she still retained. With Jenny, it was the woman of it, or the greater power of resistance.

"I owe my life to you," Royal was saying. "How can I ever repay you?"

Jenny hung her head.

"You know . . . then?"

"As if you could ever keep me from knowing," said Royal. "You sacrificed everything that I might live. Why didn't you let me die?"

"Because I was ambitious for you," replied Jenny in a low, hesitating voice; "because I wanted to see you live and win out."

"Is that all?"

". . . That's all." Jenny's voice sank into a whisper.

Royal sighed.

"But you'll soon regain your strength," Jenny went on, in a calm, hopeful tone, "so that you can start all over again, with renewed courage . . . with greater visions."

"What about yourself?" Royal put the question in gentle abruptness.

"Oh! I shall content myself now with the secondary things in life." Then she told him of her plans. "You see, I shall be *chatelaine*—mistress of my own little chateau, and I mean to call it 'Bird's Rest.' Perhaps I shall take up carpet weaving again, the weaving of magic rugs out of the commonplace, that will waft me to paradise. It may pay better than fiddling."

Royal smiled. "You will die of lonesomeness," he said.

"Never—never so long as I have the birds, and . . . and memories," responded Jenny; "it will be Heaven."

"But you are just on the threshold of life,"

Royal declared. "It would be a sin to renounce everything . . . your art . . . your . . ."

"Speaking of Heaven," Jenny broke in; "I'm afraid you were much nearer to it than you ever imagined." By this remark, she hoped to side-track the trend of their conversation.

But Royal refused to be shunted. So he said: "I was never nearer Heaven than I am . . . now."

After that, they both lapsed into silence.

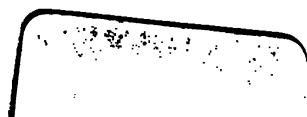
Presently, Royal leaned over and pressed his lips to the hand that still held the shuttle. It trembled violently, and as his eyes turned scorchingly upon her dear face a glow of pink overspread it—his dream of happiness was assured.

What a wonderful thing the spirit of youth is! Youth, reincarnated out of the ashes of defeat and despair, took possession of these two. The touch of warm lips had rekindled the flame. And where there is youth, there is love; where the sun shines, there are sure to be flowers. All fears, all doubts, had fled. The past was wiped out. The future glowed. . . .

THE END



or no circu-
rom the Bulle.



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995 (Department of Health 1996).

There is a growing emphasis on the need to improve the efficiency of the public sector, and to ensure that the public sector is able to deliver the services that are required by the public. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the introduction of competition, the restructuring of public services, and the introduction of new management practices. These initiatives have led to a number of changes in the way that public services are delivered, and have led to a number of improvements in the efficiency of the public sector.

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